

25 February 1963

DIFFERENT LAWS

PART 1

The diagrams in 63/11 showed clearly the stage by which, through Work, the individual comes under different Laws as he goes up the Ladder of Self-Realization. The common man who is in the state shown in Figure 1 is entirely under the *Law of Chance or Accident*, because at any moment one 'I' or group of 'I's can give place to any other with a change of circumstances, so anything can happen to him. How could such a man, for instance, keep a secret or be relied on for important work? That is why before anyone is accepted by a School he has to show that he can keep the rules of this School. These rules begin to free him from the Law of Accident. People who either won't or can't keep them drift away somewhere else.[†] The School also has to protect itself from the Law of Accident so that it is ensured against deviating from its line. You remember that 'Participation in the Mysteries was barred, first, to criminals, second, to barbarians and finally to people in whose lives great calamities occurred' – though we are not as strict as that!

So the School has to act as Deputy Steward for a time until enough 'I's gather round the Watchman (Figure 2) and give him enough strength for the individual to come under the *Law of Cause and Effect*. This means that his own planned action, governed by such Will as he has, fills the time ordinarily occupied by Chance. If there is no *room* for Accident to enter a person's day he will be to that extent free from it (Figure 3). People notice this especially when they decide to meditate; as long as we hold our attention on the meditation we are under the Law of Cause and Effect, but now we recognise all too well the power of Accident through our changing 'I's even during a half-hour.

But after a time through Work in the School and through regular half-hours of freedom from Accident, a man begins to appreciate moments when he comes under a new Law altogether – the *Law of Fate*. This brings with it memories of his childhood and it comes when his Essence has grown sufficiently to occupy its right place in relation to the changing Personality, for Fate works through *Essence*. If at this stage 'one's planet turns towards one' many new impressions will come, and the influence described as 'Guardian Angel' will be felt. When in the final stage (Figure 5) the Master comes we are under the *Law of Will*.

In connection with the Law of Will Mr. Ouspensky said once:

It was explained that, for the control of Moving Centre, organisation is necessary and someone else's Will is necessary. You will remember we spoke about the 'Stop Exercise' and other exercises. [The Stop Exercise is much used in organised work of a Fourth Way. On the command 'Stop!' (or 'Quib!' in Sufi Schools) given by the Sheikh or Head of the School, everyone within hearing immediately stops all outer and inner movements – literally freezes in his tracks.] It was explained very definitely that studying or working on the lower storey (that is, through the Moving Centre) is impossible without a Teacher who knows especially this side of the Work, is specially

[†]**Note:** I want to remind you just at this moment of one such group of Rules: they centre around the principle that we, in this School, can have nothing to do with Soviet propaganda or filling the Soviet Exchequer with good English money. Whatever anyone else may do these Rules will be of great value to us in the times that are coming.

prepared for it and has special experience in this work. And even in Schools there are many other questions, for instance, the question of physical health and age. If a person is young he can begin the work on the Moving Centre, but if he is older it becomes more difficult, because moving habits are very strong and it is difficult to reach their origin.

(Ref: A Meeting on November 1st, 1928)

That was said thirty-four years ago and now we see how important it is! The fully Realized Man has stressed recently that in relation to the Ascent of the Ladder through the increase of Sattva Guna, good thoughts, good feelings and good actions are all-important. But we know that without organised work our thoughts, feelings and actions are all controlled by the Moving Centre and its habits. So *how* we sit, *how* we stand, *how* we walk becomes very important. We all recognise the impact of the Moving Centre immediately we become active again after a half-hour of freedom from activity.

He has also given us his Keertan music, for music can be used by young or old as an additional aid to our weak wills in controlling the lower storey and the moving centre. He used these words in answer to a question about how we could bring more devotion into our efforts on the Way:

This music is called 'Keertan' meaning 'Song in praise of...' and it is a form of devotion. When we chant the word of God with devotion, an atmosphere is created which establishes relation with the energy of God. There are different devotional ways: to study spiritual writings, sing spiritual songs, to give material help to others, to worship, to pray, or to meditate with devotion. We have only to see that we do it inwardly as well as outwardly. To get the benefit of this Keertan one does not need much action, or intelligence, but only a devotional heart. The rhythmic sound creates a tempo, a subtle rhythm of vibration, which unites the body, mind and heart (of people with heavy minds who cannot do much action) and they come under the influence of Higher Emotion and Higher Self. Once one has achieved unity of thought, feeling and action one discovers certain forces within himself, joins himself with them and realizes the Atman. But all those who don't have unity of thought, feeling and action are confused and indulge in fruitless activity.

In these ways the middle storey can be brought in to resolve the conflict between the 'good intention' and the inertia of the body.

PART 2. THE CONFERENCE OF THE BIRDS

Second Instalment

After the Hoopoe had admonished the owl with a story (too long to tell here) illustrating the fate of those who, like her, are attached to their worldly possessions, the march now commenced:

The road was, however, so fearful that after they had proceeded a short distance, every one of them began to tremble. They, therefore, halted at a convenient spot. They had serious misgivings as to the result of their adventure, and they felt that unless their doubts and difficulties were overcome, it would be impossible to proceed further. They, therefore, requested the Hoopoe to sit on a throne and answer the questions they wished to put to her. The Hoopoe accordingly took her seat on the royal throne.

A bird then came forward and said to the Hoopoe: 'You are just like ourselves, and

we are just like you. Nevertheless, you are far ahead of us in the path of the Truth. Why this difference?’

‘This blessing is due to the fact that I had a glance from Solomon for a moment,’ said she. ‘This position has not been attained by mere devotion and service, or by spending silver and gold. All this good fortune is the result of a favourable glance. You should also spend your life in devotion and await the grace of Solomon. As soon as that grace is vouchsafed to you, you will rise higher than any stage that I can describe to you!’

Sultan Mahmud and the Orphan Lad

‘One day Sultan Mahmud wandered away from his retinue, and saw a boy seated on the bank of a river with a fishing-rod. He had a pale and haggard look.

“Why are you so pale and sad?” asked Mahmud.

“Sir,” said the boy, “we are seven children. Our father is dead and our mother infirm and bed-ridden. She has not a penny to buy food for us. During the day I try to catch fish, and that forms our meal in the evening.”

The king asked for the rod, and offered to give half the spoil to him. The boy consented. Princely fortune now favoured the orphan. They had a haul of a hundred fish that day. The boy wondered what the reason for such extraordinary good luck could be as he offered the king his half-share. He, however, told him to keep the whole. The next day he sent for the boy and said, “Come now, yesterday we were partners in the fishing enterprise; now I want you to be a partner in my kingdom.”

No sooner said than done. Mahmud made over half his territories to the lad. An old acquaintance asked the boy how he had managed to attain that position. “My grief was turned into joy,” said he, “because a fortunate man happened to pass by me.”

Another bird then submitted that he was very weak, whereas the road was far away and full of obstacles. ‘In the very first stage of the journey I shall succumb,’ he said. ‘Where the most gallant and valiant souls have fallen and are lying in eternal sleep, I can only raise a little dust and shall be for ever lost.’

‘Why,’ said the Hoopoe, ‘do you set your heart on this world, a den of impurities? Why fear death? Each one of us has to die some day. So long as a man is not completely dead to his own ego and to the world, his soul does not enter the realms of purity. Therefore, do not, like a woman, bring fresh excuses. Once Divine Love penetrates the heart of a man, it makes him as brave as a lion, even though he was as feeble as an ant. How can one who takes a leap into the ocean of adventure accept any drink but the blood of his heart?’

Another bird said, ‘I am a sinner. Who would admit such an unworthy creature into the presence of the Simurg?’

‘Poor benighted creature,’ replied the Hoopoe, ‘do not despair. Lower your head in penitence. Pray for Divine mercy. If you repent with a sincere heart, you will obtain a thousand keys to open the gate to that path of Divinity. The Grace of providence transcends our comprehension.’

‘I am a creature of a vacillating disposition,’ observed another bird, ‘at times saintly in thought, at times sinful. Sometimes, I get drunk in a tavern; sometimes I’m lost in prayer and meditation. At times Satan drags me away from the path of righteousness; at times angels guide and restore me to that path. Such is my pitiful condition.’

‘Listen to me, you perplexed creature,’ said the Hoopoe. ‘Such is the condition of all

in creation. If one did not trip, one would not lower his head in penitence. If all were godly, would there be any room for the prophets?

Another bird submitted: 'My passion[†] is my enemy. This dog of passion never cares for my inclinations and instructions. I don't know how to make him subservient to my will.'

'This world abounds in millions of slaves of this dog,' said the Hoopoe. 'He leads them all by the nose. Thousands of these slaves die in disgrace, but this infidel of a dog never dies. ...'

The Hoopoe continued: 'So long as the dog of passion runs in front of you so long will Iblis (Maya or Satan) seize you by the throat. Your own identification is your Satan, and subservience to this devil turns this earth into a hell.'

'Once a foolish man complained to a Sufi Saint that Satan had waylaid him, seduced him and made him miserable. But the Sufi told him that Satan himself had been there only a minute before and laid a complaint against the man! "Why does that fool keep getting in my way?" said Satan, "I've enough to do already, since my jurisdiction extends over the whole world. I'm not at all concerned with those who withdraw themselves from my domain. Therefore tell this man to keep away and he'll have no reason to fear me."

NOTE

This reminds us of a story Mr. Ouspensky used to tell, which is especially apt as next Wednesday is Ash Wednesday. Lent was supposed to be a period during which people could be free from certain Identifications. But once during the Lenten fast the Abbot came suddenly into a monk's cell and caught him red-handed boiling an egg over a candle. 'The devil tempted me,' stammered the monk in confusion. Out jumped the devil from behind the Ikon shouting, 'That's a damned lie. You know perfectly well I never even knew how to boil an egg over a candle until you taught me!'

And in this week's *Punch* a man is saying to his goggle-eyed wife 'I say, it's Shrove Tuesday. Let's have Crêpes Suzettes for dinner.'

* * *

[†]NOTE: The word translated 'Passion' is related in the *Philokalia* to the Greek 'Pathos' (meaning also 'suffering'), which is the final stage in the process of *Identification* where a man is completely in the power of some habit or desire – like a drink or drug addict. Desires are a normal possession of man and the driving-force of human life, but the cause of unnecessary human suffering is when the desire possesses the man instead. Do away with the identification and the desires will have no power over you.