

25 January 1965

## READING 1

Before we settle on a particular subject for study we ought at the beginning of a New Year to be clear about the present direction of this Work. Is it the same today as it was yesterday? No, I feel strongly that it should be quite new and that we'll not progress until we resolutely discard what is past and done with.

Here is one way of expressing our new outlook. Though I find much to agree with, I wouldn't like it to be accepted as a dogma. It's only one man's expression (C. L.). Let us freely debate the main points in it. Then when we have it right we must keep to it and try to carry it out.

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### CONVERSATIONS ON THE SUBJECT OF THE FOURTH WAY. PART 2

#### Conversation 1

- This Way that you have been describing – is it the Fourth Way?
- Yes, but one of the main points about the Fourth Way has often been misunderstood. Unlike the other three Ways, no rigid or permanent conditions are needed in which to work.
- But I thought it was always kept secret?
- The Knowledge possessed by those in the Fourth Way was always kept secret. In the past free thinking was looked on with great suspicion and religious persecution was rife, so special precautions had to be taken.
- And are these no longer needed?
- Now there is far greater freedom. In the free world at any rate, suspicion and persecution have largely ceased.
- So there is no longer any need for secrecy?
- Quite the opposite. The necessity for Self-realization and the existence of methods and Knowledge required must be brought to the notice of everybody who wants it. But the Knowledge that is given to people must always be in proportion to their own attainment and therefore to their degree of Understanding. Harm will be done if unprepared people are told precious things they cannot understand.
- But isn't it true just the same that special conditions are needed?
- No, that is the whole point. Man's development is a natural growth, like that of a plant or a tree. If you put him in artificial conditions he will not develop naturally.
- Then what are the right conditions for his development?
- The conditions of life to which he belongs – after all, that is why he was created.
- But surely life influences are harmful to man's development?
- If he has a strong Aim he can turn them to his purpose. Then they will not do him any harm. Man was not created to avoid life, he was created to *live*. He was put in his place in the world in order to realize himself. He cannot do so in any other place.
- But how can he find what his place in the world really is?
- By accepting life – by not opposing it in any way. Then in time he will find his own place – the meditation will bring him to it. The function of every man in the world is different – there are an infinite number of different places to be filled.

## Conversation 2

– You said man was created in order to *live*. What do you think his work in the world should be?

– As I see it, man's work in the world has three dimensions – it exists on three different scales. Everything we have discussed in our earlier conversations refers only to the first scale – it refers to man's personal life, his inner work.

– And what is the next?

– The next is connected with man's outer life – the world of people and things. Work on this scale is much bigger, and within this larger whole his own individuality is just an atom. He learns to help other people besides himself.

– And the third kind?

– The third kind is bigger still – it is concerned with helping mankind. It consists in conveying the right influences to mankind through the formulation of Truth. Such work requires 'dedication'; there is no longer anything 'personal', for everything is in him and he in everything.

– And this is the most important?

– No, no, they are all three important, for each depends on the last. It is like the growth of a tree. The first thing to grow is the tree itself – the roots, the trunk and the branches. Then at an appointed time the leaves and the flowers appear. And finally the tree bears fruit, and the fruit is picked and eaten. For though Truth is eternal, its expression keeps changing and has soon to be fashioned again.

– And the growth of the tree itself – that is man's personal work?

– Yes, it all depends on this – nothing can happen without it.

– But what *is* man's personal work – what does it really depend on?

– In the Fourth Way one learns how to become one's own master – that is what man's personal work depends on. Becoming one's own master one knows how to help other people. Helping other people one discovers what is needed by mankind.

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## Further conversation (to complete)

– One way of helping people – the way we have been discussing – is through Being. If one *is* something – if one gets something from the meditation – it will come out – in one way or another it will be given to other people. If one *is* something people naturally come to one; they collect round Being as bees round a source of honey. But in order to help large numbers of people Knowledge is necessary too – a great deal of Knowledge, and the ability to formulate it in the right way.

– What kind of knowledge do you mean?

– Knowledge of the Truth that lies behind the System.

– But why not the System itself?

– The System of fifty years ago was *one* formulation of this Truth, but now a new formulation is needed.

– And why is this?

– That old expression of the System was intended for a specific purpose at a specific time. It was given, if you remember, only to people of a certain kind – people who had ‘magnetic centre’. It was wasteful also – ‘many were called but few were chosen’. And it was given verbally – it was never intended to be written down. One of the reasons for this was that the words in the System had to be specially learnt – their meaning could only be understood through practical experience.

– But later it was written down and published?

– Yes, but of course in this form it is worse than useless. As written material – as a series of published works – it confuses people terribly – it leads to all sorts of wrong ideas.

– So would you say the System is dead?

– That particular outward expression of the System is dead, but the Truth behind the System never dies. Just lately it is very much alive.

– And you feel it is this Truth which has to be reformulated?

– Yes, it is our job to do this – it is our job to reformulate what we understand of the Truth in a new way. Otherwise the Truth will be lost. Truth cannot remain unformulated for long or it is lost. We cannot afford to let all that we have understood be lost.

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Now where shall we begin? What is the central fact that we have understood – the axle-pin on which everything depends?

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