

5 December 1977

LARGE MONDAY MEETING

The meeting began with the announcements:

Lord Allan. The House and the office will be closed from Thursday evening, the 22nd December, until Tuesday midday on the 3rd January.

There will be a Meditation meeting on Tuesday, 10th January (we are now on to next year).

The Turning practices begin on the 17th January, with the first Mukabeleh on Friday, the 20th.

The first large Monday meeting next term will be on January 23rd; but the groups will probably begin the week before that, because with an early Easter the term would otherwise be rather short.

We would like to thank all those volunteers who came to the Working parties from other groups during this term. Their assistance has been very valuable and has been much appreciated.

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Dr. Roles then began as follows:

I would like just to say that when we meet again in January, Nolan Howitt, of New Zealand, will be staying with us for a month with his wife Bridget; Nolan having been to India for four or five days of audiences with the Shankaracharya. So he will come with that fresh energy and it will be very good to have him among us again, and hear how the Harris's have been getting on since their return to Wellington.

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About 'Life and Death', there is rather a nice little story which Alice Bolton puts in her letter about a friend talking of past events in the presence of his small grand-nephew, who said:

'Where was I when...?'

Uncle. 'You weren't born then.'

Child. 'But, Uncle, I never was not nowhere.'

And young children know this very well. It is the grown-ups who forget it.

He went on:

Now, at your meetings – reports of which I have read – the idea of the drama seemed to be catching on. It is a very difficult idea to assimilate in its real meaning; but in this week's Reading 6 I have put two questions of Lord Allan's, which drew answers at our recent audiences with the Shankaracharya on this subject. And the second of those, which I will leave to you for your last meetings this week, gives us rather a good go-ahead for Christmas and the New Year.

But now I will get Allan to read the first of these two questions of his, which I would like to discuss this evening:

A. The question was: 'How can School people help each other to be natural?'

And the Shankaracharya said:

S. To be 'natural' is to be straight and pure and, if one achieves this, then one is certainly 'natural'; but being natural should not be taken to mean that one should be crude or naked.

The whole creation, after all, is a drama, a play; and the whole play has to be performed in a particular style and manner. There is a role for each actor, a costume for each actor, positions and actions for each actor, and lines for him to speak. Unless an actor wears the costume designed for his role; if he doesn't use the lines written for the part; then he will not affect the audience in the way the producer intends. So, if the play is to be performed it must be done in the right way to produce the required effect on the audience and give them the pleasure which the play is designed to produce. To respond to the appropriate dress, the proper language, and the proper distance between the audience and the players, is also a part of the 'natural' presentation of the play.

When one says that 'one has to be natural' therefore, one must keep this in mind, and keep the right distance from anyone with whom one has to establish a relation. What one has to watch is that one's performance should not get crooked or artificial; *one should not elaborate, but do only what is necessary*. If we learn to keep to this, then our role will be well-played and the whole play will be recognised by us as 'true to nature'.

(Record, 28 October 1977)

Dr. R. That will take a little time to sink in! But it is clear that when the Shankaracharya speaks of the drama, he is speaking in a very impersonal way, and from a very high point of view – where Brahman, the Absolute, is the author of the play, and lays down certain Laws – the Law of Three Forces, the Law of Cause and Effect and others – and many Conscious beings serve under Him as producers, directors, and all the other parts in such a Consciously produced drama.

This is in contrast to all the mechanically-produced dramas and mini-plays, which are going on all the time in Creation. We are trying to learn how to play in a Consciously produced drama. Our ordinary lives go by the Laws of Nature – chiefly Cause and Effect. But, *here*, we try to learn how to play our particular role Consciously.

Any questions now about this?

Mrs. Gould. Who is the audience?

Dr. R. In our particular drama, which is done in private (except on rare occasions where guests from all over were invited by Mr. Ouspensky to come to his Psychological Lectures, or to his talks in America), the audience is the small circle of ourSelves and our closest friends.

In those dramas and mini-plays of Creation the audience is again ourSelves looking out at the big world to learn from all that goes on around us. But we also meet with the reactions of a far wider audience in the media – television, newspapers and so on. It is all for learning. I myself am still only learning, so what I say mustn't be taken too seriously!

Q. You said the other day that when you first went to see the Shankaracharya you took no interpreter; but an interpreter turned up. Is that part of the drama?

Dr. R. Well, when I first met the Shankaracharya, with some seventy other Westerners, the Maharishi was interpreter; but when I had a private talk with him at the end of that stay, and he said it was very important to continue the connection 'between you and me' we were at a loss as to how to find the way to his headquarters. We did not even know where it was; and how were we (if we found him) to understand anything of what he said? And it was after that, when we had an invitation from him for the following year – 1962 – that a member of the School of Economic Science was sent along by the head of the School to us. This man, Jaiswal, had been born and lived his early life within a mile of the Ashram; was a student of Hindi and Sanskrit, and also knew quite a bit about our System – our language.

This is one of the things which make me feel that though we, as actors, didn't know our parts, yet we were like puppets kept in motion by some mighty Force, who was pulling the strings. Do you see what I mean? Everything has worked out marvellously in an unforeseeable way, but we the actors have always had to play from day to day – trying to do what is right, but without knowing why and what for.

The same applies to Mr. Ouspensky, who said all this about himself.

Any questions.

Q. Would you describe the Conscious drama as a play within the play of ordinary life?

Dr. R. Yes. Any Consciously produced and directed drama must have reference to the life around at a particular time and in a particular country. The thing about a Consciously produced drama, is that it has to be a little different every time according to the country and the times; whereas mechanical dramas go on and on and on forever.

Q. (a woman) It would seem that we would have to be fairly high up the Ladder to know and appreciate the drama. Can you say anything about that?

Dr. R. Well, 'the higher up the mountain, the greener grows the grass'. None of us can know the whole thing, but the more we know, the more intelligently we play our parts. But each one can know what his or her capabilities are, and in what way they can be useful for this drama from quite early acquaintance with what we do here. People at the New groups are already showing this; we improve on that gradually as we know more. Everyone is valuable and has something to contribute that is his very own.

(Pause)

Dr. Roles then went on:

I want to call attention once again to the Shankaracharya's injunction, that we have to keep in mind that everything must be done according to the Will of the Producer and the Author of the play; and when one has learnt to be natural, one has to watch that one's performance does not become selfish and artificial; and one should not 'elaborate or improvise' which is the expression he uses.

A. But he said, I think, not add to or take from.

Dr. R. Yes, though that depends on the particular episode or scene in the drama. But do only what is necessary – we must learn to keep to this.

This applies very much to the smaller dramas within our own immediate experience such as the Mukabeleh and the Tradition of Mevlana. There should not be innovations by individuals. It is a Consciously produced and directed Tradition which has kept its original direction through more than seven centuries.

It is the same with the Movements we do to music. We try to keep those as they were given us, with the same music – without improvisation and the introduction of any changes. The only difference has been that, whereas we learnt them in a very harsh atmosphere, and we were terrified; nowadays we try to be as happy as possible and free from fear.

Come on, these questions are very interesting.

P. Eadie. I think the Mukabeleh is a very good example of what we have been talking about. In it, the turner is the actor; he has to be receptive to the Will of the Sheikh Effendi; and at the same time he has to obey the Samazen Bashi, who sees the whole pattern of the evening.

Dr. R. agreed, and added: And each turner has to be sensitive to the symbolism and to the Mukabeleh music. It is a marvellous opportunity.

P. Eadie. And the turner has to keep the distance.

Dr. R. Yes, in a very literal sense. But there is a lot more in that expression the Shankaracharya uses of ‘keeping your distance’; because the temporary Leader of the School has ‘to keep his distance’ from individuals before he can help them. If he can be rung up at any time about any trivial thing, and be (shall we say?) on ‘slap and tickle’ terms with anybody or everybody he can’t help them; he is not playing his part rightly. (Laughter)

Dr. R. continued:

Any questions about this? I am leading up to what I want to show you from Mr. Ouspensky – about something very particular about this subject after we have meditated later on. But, let us go on with this conversation and see if we can understand more.

Mr. Ouspensky used to say as he came back to Lyne Place after a meeting – sometimes in a light-hearted mood:

What were we all doing together in the last life? It is evident we were all together or you wouldn’t be here now! We didn’t know the System at all last time; of that I am certain. So what *were* we doing? Talking philosophy or what?

This time we know more, but I don’t think this is the final performance; and we have been assured that a lot of the unnecessary part of the drama this time, won’t be necessary next time. Mr. Ouspensky assured us he would come to England earlier – before World War I – ‘to find my friends’ and there won’t be a Lyne Place for instance.

Q. Can this drama be only understood in relation to the fifth step of the Ladder?

(Q. then altered to:) Can this drama only be understood in relation to the fifth dimension; and is this the same as the fifth step of the Ladder?

Dr. R. Don’t mix the two ideas up. The fifth dimension in Mr. Ouspensky’s terminology is a Law of the Universe – the eternal repetition of every cycle. The line of time is not a straight

line coming from nowhere and ending nowhere; it is a circle, and there are small circles within bigger circles. The fifth dimension means the continual repetition of a given cycle, with or without minor differences.

But you first asked. How could this be understood by us in relation to the Ladder of Self-realization? The answer lies in the *present moment* Now, because the Creator, the Producer and the Director are timeless and always Now; we meet them only *Now*, and can receive guidance only in the present moment.

It is no good thinking about the future and what we are going to do next time, and what we did last time; that was only put in as a joke. The present moment Now will give you the answers.

Anthony Kedros. You said that the dramas of the Fourth Way were, as it were, mirrors of the customs of the Society of that day. Can you say anything about the relationship of the inner and outer dramas?

Dr. R. Well, the Fourth Way is in contrast to the Traditional Ways which always have fixed form, fixed temples, fixed rituals regardless to a great extent of the place and the time. The Fourth Way happens in real life itself. And every player in this drama has to play out his own life at the same time as learning his role in the particular Consciously-produced play in a School.

I think it is for you to look at your life, Anthony, and see how that works – you have managed pretty well, so far!

Anthony Kedros. What about the School as a whole rather than the individual members of it?

Dr. R. Well, this is what we have to try and understand, and it used to be called in the System ‘Third Line of Work’ – to understand about the function of the School as a whole in relation to the world around at that time.

For instance, when we first met up with this, it was between the two wars and life then was altogether different from the life we lead now. Then we had to weather World War II; Mr. Ouspensky had also to weather the Revolution in World War I and come to an alien country. Such changes have to be taken into account.

At that time things had to be kept very strict – kept very close and very secret. I don’t think the same thing applies today. Certain things still have to be kept secret; but we are out to introduce the Meditation for instance, to as many people as possible. There is much food for thought here.

Mr. Haisman. Could you liken a School to a Ballet company dedicated to their work, so that they have a big influence on dance through the world?

Dr. R. Is Mrs. Connell here? (Yes) (to Mrs. Connell): Can I say ‘Yes’ to that? (She hesitates)

There are ballet companies and ballet companies; but suppose we are talking of our Royal Ballet which was created almost out of nothing, and has become a national asset. In this case what you say, Haisman, is certainly true.

Mr. Skeaping. As Traditional Ways seemed to have failed to perform their original function, is this why things are now developing through the Fourth Way now?

Dr. R. I did not say the Traditional Ways had *failed* at all; for surely they have been of the utmost value in their time. But, in the 1970's, they don't play such a vast role as they did, for instance, in the Middle Ages in monastic life, and so on.

But I don't think they have failed at all. Speaking of the Christian Church with all its branches, I think they are due for a resurrection of their influence. They have only dwindled in their influence, because of people not very far up the Ladder. Their founders were inspired; and there is evidence that Mount Athos, for example, is undergoing a resurrection at the moment. It dwindled during the last war to about six hermits but we learn that it is now full of genuine aspirants.

Mr. Ouspensky used to say that everything had to be as it had been; there are so many causes, so many interwoven chains of events that there has always been only one way in which history takes form and that is the way things have kept happening.

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Dr. R. then went on:

Well, supposing we come back a little nearer home – to the present moment? Does any of this sort out some of your problems, as individuals? How do you see that you can derive profit from this idea of the drama?

Miss Newington. Could you say that individuals learn their roles in the Conscious drama through communication with people around them? Could you say anything about that?

Dr. R. Well, partly, Yes. Individuals have been moulded in a certain way to fit their environment from very early on. But they learn chiefly from making efforts to help in this drama, and watching what they are asked to do, to find what their particular line is.

Q. (a woman) Can you say anything about aspirations? There seem to be cases where people have aspirations and nothing comes of it, and at other times their aspirations are fulfilled. (Then she added:) And talents, as well as aspirations.

Dr. R. Well, of course, everybody has good aspirations from time to time. Unless those good aspirations fit the circumstances, then they don't come off. But it is really no blame to the people who have them. Keep having good aspirations and await the moment when something can be done. For instance, the Shankaracharya says:

Don't think you are a failure because your good aspirations haven't had any results. Maybe the time has not yet come when you can put those aspirations into effect.

There is a lot in *timing*.

Dr. R. (to Mr. Haisman) I want your help in this matter of the drama; and I just wanted *you* to realise that the Shankaracharya is speaking on a very high and impersonal level about the Author, the Producer, the directors, and so on. But you could help very much. There must be dramatists and scriptwriters who put a novel like *Anna Karenina* into the right form for television presentation. (Mr. Haisman has since sent us a very valuable letter, which we intend to use.)

Q. (a woman) Could you also say something about the script?

Dr. R. You get a script every week? All too many scripts! Well, there are some with a talent that way, aren't there? I mean, in the BBC there are. But in what sense do you mean?

Q. (same) I thought the Shankaracharya said that we had to learn the right language.

A. (to Dr. R.) He said 'the lines' didn't he?

Dr. R. Yes; 'each role has its own lines, its own costume, its own actions, and so on'. We have first to try to see the kind of role Oedipus can play; then we may be assigned the appropriate costume, and the appropriate lines.

Q. Doesn't it all depend on communication with the Director?

Dr. R. It really does, Yes.

Q. (same) And is this not an individual thing?

Dr. R. Yes, it is. Remember he is not only talking about the physical level – the physical picture we get of the drama, the actors and the audience, and how to communicate by means of scripts and so on. But his words usually apply to all three levels. He is speaking also from the point of view of the subtle level – about communication without words. And on the Causal level everything is One; and the particular play may be only in embryo, and may not have come into existence yet.

Mrs. Gould. Isn't it also teamwork? Because if we had not met Mr. Ouspensky's work, we would not have known anything about it?

Dr. R. Certainly yes. We would never have understood anything the Shankaracharya has said if we hadn't met Mr. Ouspensky. And, undoubtedly, team work is necessary for any company of actors. In our work there is never a 'one man show'.

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Dr. Roles then said:

Now I propose that we keep that on ice for the present, and that we meditate. Then I would like to read you something.

MEDITATION

Dr. R. This is about Christmas. When we are celebrating the real meaning of Christmas, we might keep in mind one aspect of it within its general message of 'Peace on Earth, goodwill towards men'. And that is in relation to the Drama; and those who have read *A New Model of the Universe* will remember that there are some very cogent references in that book to the idea of the Drama, and particularly in relation to the ideal Drama of the life of Christ.

I would like you to be reading those parts of *The New Model* (chiefly p. 27, p. 156, and around p. 500) during the holiday, but now I will just quote some little bits of it which are especially relevant to what we have been discussing:

Dr. R. reads:

The chief difference between the Mysteries as they were performed in Egypt and Greece, and the Mystery which was played in Palestine, lies in the fact that the latter was played in real life – not on the stage, but amidst real nature (seas and

mountains) in the streets and public places of real towns; with a real crowd, with real nails with real suffering.

All the (named) actors in that drama knew their parts, and acted them in accordance with the general plan, with the aim and purpose of the play.

Every actor knew what words he had to say, and at what moment.

In studying the Drama of Christ, it is necessary to separate the legendary element, which is often borrowed from the life stories of other Messiahs, prophets, (and incarnations of God) from the actual narration of the life of Jesus; and then to separate the legends – the events of that life – from the teachings which it illustrated.

About the legendary element, the idea of God sacrificing Himself for the salvation of men exists also in Indian and other mythologies. The god, Shiva, drank the poison which was to poison the whole of mankind; therefore many of his statues have the throat painted blue.

Dr. Roles added:

The same with Krishna, who sucked the poison from the man's hand; and in his portraits the blue colour of his skin symbolises this same fact.

We were very fortunate in seeing the Krishna cycle performed by the best actors in India – put on for us by Shankaracharya; and also the Rama cycle from the *Ramayana*.

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Now on page 499, Mr. Ouspensky asks the question:

Is it possible that all the *dramatis personae* of the Gospel Drama are destined eternally to play their parts; eternally to say the same words, do the same thing?

The answer he gave was: No, not in general. But there are two kinds of role illustrated in the Gospel – Conscious and unconscious. In the Conscious roles there may be changes; there may be assignment of different roles to certain actors. One may play the hero, one may play the villain; one may even play Christ.

But unconscious roles cannot change. The unconscious roles of the Gospel Drama are firmly fixed in their invariable repetition. What else can a man cry, who has cried. 'Crucify him'? What can Pilate say or do differently? He can only wash his hands (of the matter) again and again.

CONCLUSIONS

So, though in our own little 'playlet', we are very far from *that*, yet it is a marvellous privilege to be called on to act in a small play connected with the bigger drama of the advent of Meditation and non-dualism in the West; and bigger still right back to the dawn of this cycle of civilisation. So we can have never-ending enjoyment in learning to play our parts as they should be played, each for himself and in getting glimpses of the Drama as a whole.

I hope you all have a very happy Christmas which you all deserve to enjoy.

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