

## CHAPTER II

*Man is an incomplete being – He lives below his legitimate level – Re-valuation of old values – ‘Useful’ and ‘harmful’ – Illusions – Man is asleep – Practical self-study – Study of obstacles – Psychology of lying – Man is a machine – Creating a permanent ‘I’ – Allegory of a house in disorder – Roles – Buffers – Self-remembering – Why this system cannot be popular – Prison – Formulation of aim – To be free – Sin – Repentance – Helping humanity – Attraction and repulsion – Self-observation – Division of all that belongs to man into seven categories – Knowledge and being – Their relationship – We can have more knowledge – Necessity of changing being – Understanding – Harmful functions – Expression of negative emotions – Unnecessary talk – Difference between this system and others – Levels of being – Thinking in different categories – Dangers of the present situation.*

I WOULD LIKE YOU TO REVISE IN YOUR MEMORY what I said last time, because many things I said were not fully developed. I only gave hints, a general idea, of things we have to study; so it is necessary to recall the order of things and their relative importance. Because some things I said were essential for the understanding of further ideas, while some I brought in merely in explanation of other things.

But first I would like to stress again one important point. This system belongs to the class of systems which regard man as an incomplete being and study him from the point of view of his possible development. Ordinary psychology is very far from reality. The man it studies is an imaginary quantity. Man is not what he is supposed to be. We ascribe to ourselves many qualities we do not possess. We are not conscious. If we are not conscious we cannot have unity, cannot have individuality, cannot have an Ego or ‘I’. All these things are invented by man to keep the illusion of consciousness. Man can be conscious, but at present he is not. It must be recognized that man lives below his legitimate level. There are also other things man may attain, but now I speak of what belongs to him by right, but what he does not have.

This system turns everything we know or ever thought of upside down. It cannot be reconciled with ordinary psychological ideas. We have to decide how we are to see man: as an egg or as a bird. And if we see him as an egg we must not ascribe to him properties of a bird. When we see him as an egg the whole psychology becomes different: all human life becomes the life of embryos, of incomplete beings. And for some the meaning of life becomes the possibility of passing to another state.

It is very important to understand what is a complete being and what is an incomplete being, because if this is not understood from the beginning it will be difficult to go further. Perhaps an example will help to illustrate what I mean. Let us compare a horse-carriage with an aeroplane. An aeroplane has many possibilities that an ordinary carriage does not have, but at the same time an aeroplane can be used as an ordinary carriage. It would be very clumsy and inconvenient and very expensive, but you can attach two horses to it and travel in an aeroplane by road. Suppose the man who has this aeroplane does not know that it has an engine and can move by itself and suppose he learns about the engine – then he can dispense with the horses and use it as a motor car. But it will still be too clumsy. Suppose that the man studies this machine and discovers that it can fly. Certainly it will have many advantages which he missed when he used the aeroplane as a carriage. This is what we are doing with ourselves; we use ourselves as a carriage, when we could fly. But examples are one thing and facts are another. There is no need of allegories and analogies, for we can speak about actual facts if we begin to study consciousness in the right way.

If we return for a moment to the analogy of an aeroplane, what is the reason why our aeroplane cannot fly? Naturally the first reason is because we do not know the machine, how to work it and how to put it in motion. And the second reason is that as a result of this

ignorance the machine works at a very slow speed. The effect of this slow speed is much greater than if we compare a horse-carriage and an aeroplane.

To follow the ideas and methods of the system fully, it is necessary to recognize and agree upon two points: the low level of consciousness and the practical absence of will and individuality in man. When these are accepted, it is very useful and necessary to learn the right use of two ideas, two words, 'useful' and 'harmful'; because it is rather difficult to apply these words to a psychological state and find what is useful in the psychological structure of man and what is harmful in it. But if you regard man from the point of view of his possible development, it becomes dear that what helps his development is useful, and what hinders it is harmful. It is very strange that it is necessary even to explain this, but unfortunately our ordinary thought, particularly when it meets with serious problems, does not use this idea; somehow we lose the understanding of what is useful and harmful. Our thought has acquired many bad habits, and one of them is thinking without purpose. Our thinking has become automatic; we are quite satisfied if we think of and develop possible side-issues without having any idea why we are doing it. From the point of view of this system such thinking is useless. All study, all thinking and investigation must have one aim, one purpose in view, and this aim must be attaining consciousness. It is useless to study oneself without this purpose. There are reasons to study oneself only if one has already realized that one does not have consciousness and one wishes to attain it. Otherwise it becomes just futile. Attaining consciousness is connected with the gradual liberation from mechanicalness, for man as he is is fully and completely under mechanical laws. The more a man attains consciousness, the more he leaves mechanicalness, which means he becomes more free from accidental mechanical laws.

The first step in acquiring consciousness is the realization that we are not conscious. But this illusion cannot be changed alone, for there are many others. As I said earlier, the worst of them is the illusion that we can 'do'. All our life is based on this illusion. We always think that we are doing when, in reality, we are not doing anything – everything happens.

Another illusion is that we are awake. When we realize that we are asleep we will see that all history is made by people who are asleep. Sleeping people fight, make laws; sleeping people obey or disobey them. The worst of our illusions are the wrong ideas among which we live and which govern our lives. If we could change our attitude towards these wrong ideas and understand what they are, this in itself would be a great change and would immediately change other things.

Now, it would be good if we start in this way: you have been thinking during the week, so try to remember what was not clear in what you have heard and ask questions, and then I will develop that line of thought.

Q. If we are not conscious, are we able to judge what is useful for us and what is harmful?

A. I said that self-observation cannot be impersonal, for we are personally interested in the right work of our machine. Right work of the organism is profitable for us, wrong work is harmful. One must have a simple commercial attitude to one's life and inner functions, and one must know what is profit and what is loss, so one cannot observe oneself quite impartially like some historical events that happened a thousand years ago. When a man adopts this attitude to himself he is ready to begin practical self-study, for practical self-study means the study of the most mechanical things. Some functions in us can become conscious, others can never become conscious. Instinctive functions, for instance, have no need to become conscious, but there are many others – our whole life is filled with them – which it is very important to make conscious or, if they cannot become conscious, to stop or eliminate, for they are really harmful. They are not merely mechanical in the sense that they are automatic; they are due to the wrong work of the machine which has gone on for a long time. So they have already caused definite harm; things have become broken or twisted or strained.

Q. In trying to study myself I can find nothing real, nothing tangible.

A. Study what is there – whether it is real or unreal. You cannot study only what is real, you have to study what is there. It is not an obstacle to self-study if you find nothing real – you must study what you find. Actually you are quite right that there is nothing real, but one must study oneself and study obstacles.

The chief obstacle to the attainment of self-consciousness is that we think we have it. One will never get self-consciousness so long as one believes that one has it. There are many other things we think we have, and because of this we cannot have them. There is individuality or oneness – we think we are one, indivisible. We think we have will, or that if we do not have it always, we *can* have it, and other things. There are many aspects to this, for if we do not have one thing, we cannot have another. We think that we have these things, and this happens because we do not know the meaning of the words we use.

There is a definite obstacle, a definite reason why we cannot have consciousness as we are. This chief obstacle in the way of development is lying. I have already mentioned lying, but we must speak more about it, for we do not know what lying means because we have never studied this question seriously. Yet the psychology of lying is really the most important part of the study of the human being. If a man could be described as a zoological type, he would be described as a lying animal.

I shall leave out all external lying and take only a man's lying to himself about himself. This is the reason why we are in the state in which we are now, and why we cannot come to a better, a higher, a more powerful, more effective state of consciousness. According to the system we are now studying we cannot know truth, because truth can be reached only in objective consciousness. So we cannot define what truth is; but if we take it that lying is the opposite of truth, we can define lying.

The most serious lying is when we know perfectly well that we do not and cannot know the truth about things and yet never act accordingly. We always think and act as though we knew the truth. This is lying. When I know that I do not know something, and at the same time say that I know, or act as though I knew it, it is lying. For instance, we know nothing about ourselves, and we really *know* that we know nothing, yet we never recognize or admit the fact; we never confess it even to ourselves, we act and think and speak as though we knew who we are. This is the origin, the beginning of lying.

When we understand this and follow this line, and when we try to connect this idea with everything we think, everything we say, everything we do, we will begin to remove the obstacles which lie on the way to consciousness. But the psychology of lying is much more difficult than we think, because there are many different kinds of lying and many very subtle forms hard to discover in ourselves. In others we see them comparatively easily, but not in ourselves.

Q. If we do not know what truth is, how do we know when we lie?

A. You know that you cannot know the truth, and if you say you do know, or can know it, it would be a lie, because no one can know the truth in the state in which we are. Do not think philosophically, take it in relation to facts. People speak about everything as though they knew. If you ask a man whether there are people on the moon, he will have an opinion about it. And so with everything else. We have opinions about everything, and all these opinions are lying, particularly about ourselves. We do not know about states of consciousness, or the different functions, or the speed of functions, or their relation to one another. We do not know about how functions are divided. We know nothing, yet we think we know about ourselves. All we have is opinions, and they are all lies.

Q. If all opinions are lies, should we avoid opinions?

A. You must know their value. The first lie we tell ourselves is when we say 'I'. It is a lie because in saying 'I' we presume certain things: we presume a certain unity and a certain

power. And if I say 'I' today and say 'I' to-morrow, it is supposed to be the same 'I', when in reality there is no connection between them. We are in this present state because of certain obstacles or certain facts in ourselves, and the most important fact that we do not understand is that we have no right to say 'I', for it will be a lie. When you begin to observe yourself you will see that it is really so: there are 'I's in you which do not know one another and never come into contact. For instance, begin to study your likes and dislikes and you will see that you can like one thing one moment and like another thing another moment, and the two are so opposed to one another that you will realize at once that those 'I's never meet. If you observe your decisions you will see that one 'I' decides and another has to carry out the decision, and this one is either unwilling to do it or never heard about it. If you find one thing one does not lie to oneself about you will be very exceptional. Being surrounded by these lies, born and educated in these lies, we cannot be any different from what we are; we are just the result, the product of this lying.

Q. If I try to find truth and find it impossible, should I not have to separate myself from the everyday world?

A. You would then study an artificial being, not a real one. You can study yourself only in the conditions in which you are, because you are the result of these conditions. You cannot study yourself apart from your conditions.

Q. Isn't there anything common to all 'I's?

A. Only one thing, that they are mechanical. To be mechanical means to depend on external circumstances.

Q. From what you said it seems very difficult to study oneself without lying to oneself.

A. No, lying must stop. You must remember the principle: lies can only produce lies.

Only when you know the chief types of lying will you be able – I do not say to struggle with them, but to observe them. Struggle comes later. Many things are necessary in order to struggle with something in ourselves; for a long time we can only study. When we know the general arrangement and classification of things in ourselves, only then does the possibility come of struggling with something. Such as we are we cannot change anything, because man is a very well balanced machine – balanced in the sense that one thing conditions another. Things look disconnected, but in actual fact they are connected, because each thing is balanced by many other things.

Q. Would you mind expounding what you mean by machine? Machines cannot have potentialities, they cannot have a hope of getting consciousness.

A. Analogies cannot be complete because they cannot be carried on indefinitely. This too is a limitation of our mind or, if you like, a limitation of our consciousness. So the comparison with a machine cannot be carried on in every direction. But man is a machine in quite a real, quite a definite sense; he cannot produce any action from himself, he is only a transmitting station, nothing more, and as such he is a machine. If a man could have an idea or could do something without external causes acting for him, then he would not be a machine, or would not be completely a machine. As he is, he is completely a machine, particularly in the state of consciousness in which we are. And the fact that we believe ourselves to be in quite a different state makes us even more mechanical.

Our machine is not even working rightly, so if a man wants to create favourable conditions for the possibility of inner growth which is in him, he must first become a normal machine, because as he is, he is not a normal machine. When we hear about mechanicalness we often think that, although man is a machine, not all his functions are equally mechanical, nor are all human activities equally mechanical. Everybody finds something that he thinks less mechanical, according to his views or tastes. In reality all human activities are equally mechanical, there is no difference from this point of view between scrubbing floors and writing poetry.

Generally speaking, it must be understood that a complete revaluation of all values from the point of view of their usefulness is necessary; without revaluation we can never move from the point at which we are. We have many wrong values – we have to be brave and start on this revaluation.

Q. I understand that we have to create an ‘I’ out of nothing. What creates ‘I’?

A. First, self-knowledge. There is a very good Eastern allegory which deals with the creation of ‘I’. Man is compared to a house full of servants, without master or steward to look after them. So the servants do what they like; none of them does his own work. The house is in a state of complete chaos, because all the servants try to do someone else’s work which they are not competent to do. The cook works in the stables, the coachman in the kitchen, and so on. The only possibility for things to improve is if a certain number of servants decide to elect one of themselves as a deputy steward and in this way make him control the other servants. He can do only one thing: he puts each servant where he belongs and so they begin to do their right work. When this is done, there is the possibility of the real steward coming to replace the deputy steward and to prepare the house for the master. We do not know what the real steward means or what the master means, but we can take it that the house full of servants and the possibility of a deputy steward describes our situation. This allegory helps us to understand the beginning of the possibility of creating a permanent ‘I’.

From the point of view of self-study and of work to attain one ‘I’, we must understand the process by which we may come from this plurality to oneness. It is a complicated process and has different stages. Between the present state of plurality of ‘I’s and the one controlling ‘I’ we wish to attain, there are certain stages of development which must be studied. But first we must understand that there are certain formations in us, without knowing which we cannot understand how we eventually come from our present state to the state of one ‘I’, if it is possible for us.

You see, although a great many of our ‘I’s are disconnected and do not even know one another, they are divided into certain groups. This does not mean that they are divided consciously; they are divided by circumstances of life. These groups of ‘I’s manifest themselves as roles that a man plays in his life. Everybody has a certain number of roles: one corresponds to one set of conditions, another to another and so on. Man himself seldom notices these differences. For instance, he has one role for his work, another for his home, yet another among friends, another if he is interested in sport, and so on. These roles are easier to observe in other people than in oneself. People are often so different in different conditions that these roles become quite obvious and well defined; but sometimes they are better hidden or even played only inside without any external manifestations. All people, whether they know it or not, whether they wish it or not, have certain roles which they play. This acting is unconscious. If it could be conscious, it would be quite different, but one never notices how one passes from one role to another. Or if one notices it one persuades oneself that one is doing it on purpose, that it is a conscious action. In reality the change is always controlled by circumstances, it cannot be controlled by man himself, because he himself does not exist yet. Sometimes there are definite contradictions between one and another role. In one role one says one thing, has certain definite views and convictions; then one passes into another role and has absolutely different convictions and says absolutely different things, without noticing it, or else thinking that one does it on purpose.

There are very definite causes which prevent man from seeing the difference between one role or mask and another. These causes are certain artificial formations called buffers. Buffer is a very good name for these appliances. Buffers between railway carriages prevent clashing, diminish the shock. It is the same with buffers between different roles and different groups of ‘I’s or personalities. People can live with different personalities without them clashing, and if these personalities have no external manifestation, they exist internally all the same. It is very

useful to try to find what buffers are. Try to find how one lies to oneself with the help of buffers. Suppose one says 'I never argue'. Then, if one really has a good conviction that one never argues, one can argue as much as one likes and never notice it. This is the result of a buffer. If one has a certain number of good buffers, one is quite safe from unpleasant contradictions. Buffers are quite mechanical; a buffer is like a wooden thing, it does not adapt, but it plays its part very well: it prevents one seeing contradictions.

Q. How are roles created?

A. Roles are not created; they are not conscious. They are adaptations to circumstances.

Q. Is it difficult to stop playing a role?

A. It is not a question of stopping, it is a question of not identifying.

Q. Can some roles be good?

A. We speak only about consciousness and mechanicalness. If a role is mechanical, we must observe it and not identify with it. The most difficult thing is to act yourself consciously. We start consciously and then we usually identify.

Q. You said that one could not change any of one's 'I's, because man was so well balanced a machine that to upset this balance would be harmful?

A. Yes, but I meant someone trying to change by himself, without knowledge, without plan or system. But if you work on a plan such as this system it is different. That is why you are advised to do certain things which cannot produce any harmful effects. This system is the result of experience. Besides, in the actual stopping of the expression of unpleasant emotions, or stopping imagination and things of this kind, very little can be done at first. It is more for self-observation. You think that if you decide to do a thing you can really achieve it, but it is not so. Things go on automatically, mechanically, and you do not notice it. But if you start to oppose them you begin to notice them. So it is more for observation than for any results. It is not so easy to get results.

Q. If you are going to stop imagination, mustn't you have some point on which to fix your mind?

A. We always have enough points on which to fix our mind, the question is can we fix it? We have the power of observation, but we cannot keep our mind on what we want to. The situation is like this: we teach this self-study from different sides; if we do a little at one point, and a little at another point, and a little at a third point, together they will produce some effect and make it easier to do something on a fourth point. We cannot do first one thing and then another; we have to start from all sides.

As to struggle with imagination, it is suggested just as a struggle: it does not mean that we can stop it. Much more energy than we possess is needed to stop imagination – we can only attempt to stop it. We can do nothing, we can only try. We can only begin something, and if we begin many things at once we will get some results. With this system it is possible to start from many sides, and then results will appear.

Q. When I try to remember myself I cannot think or do anything else.

A. Yes, it shows how difficult it is. In the beginning, at the first attempts you make to be aware of yourself you have to use practically all your mental powers, so that nothing remains. But it does not mean that it will always be like that. It is not real self-remembering, you only study how to do it. You will find later on that consciousness can exist without thought, that consciousness is something different from thought. You use thought just to give a push, and then it begins to move in this direction and you become conscious without thought. Then you can think about anything you like. But in the beginning you certainly have to use this mental energy, because it is the only controllable energy you have except movements. But you cannot make yourself conscious by turning a wheel or running, so you have to use thinking energy at first. It does not mean that you will always have to do it – you open a door.

Q. Why is this system not widely known and popular?

A. It cannot be because of its negative character. We study the way not of acquiring but of losing. If one could acquire things at once, the system would be popular. But nothing can be promised. It is difficult to expect people to like this, for no one likes to lose illusions. People want positive things without realizing what is possible. They want to know straight away what they can attain. But first they must lose many things. The ideas of this system can never be popular so long as they are not distorted, because people will not agree that they are asleep, that they are machines – people who consider themselves important will always oppose this idea.

The system does not want to offer ideas to people who do not want them. If people have tried other methods and realized their futility, they may wish to try this system. This system is only for those who need it. It is necessary to understand man's situation and also his possibilities. As I said, man is in prison. If he realizes he is in prison, he may wish to run away. But he may be afraid that if he runs away he may find himself in a worse position than before, and so he may reconcile himself to staying in prison. If he decides to run away, he must understand that two conditions are necessary: he must be one of a number of people who wish to run away, for they have to dig a tunnel, and one man cannot do it alone, and secondly, they must have help from those who have run away before them. So first he must realize he is in prison; second, he must wish to run away; third, he must have friends who also wish to run away; fourth, he must have help from outside; fifth, he must work to dig the tunnel. No amount of faith or prayer can dig the tunnel for him. And he does not know what he will find when he gets out of prison. There are many reasons why one man cannot escape from prison. But twenty people may. Each of them profits by the work of the rest. What one gains, all the twenty gain.

Q. Do we progress by the process of elimination rather than construction?

A. There are two processes. First there is the process of elimination – many useless mechanical functions must be eliminated. Then there is the process of construction.

Q. You said that one's aim should be acquiring self-consciousness. But this aim seems too large for me, for I do not know what self-consciousness is. How can I understand better the idea of a right aim?

A. You should be able to understand the question of aim – not necessarily to be able to give a reply. Aim is one, in general, whether large or small. You should have come already to some realizations, through your trying to study yourself, and on the basis of these realizations you may be able to formulate your aim. Let us take it in this form – can we say that our aim is freedom, that we want to be free? And can we say that we are not free now? This is sufficient for a general formulation. If we start with this formulation we shall always be able to see where we are: we shall be able to see how far we are not free, in what we are becoming more free. This idea of absence of freedom must be studied individually by every person. In other words, everybody must be able to see in what way he is not free. It is not enough to remember words 'I am not free'; it is necessary to know it definitely. One must realize that at every moment of one's life one decides to do one thing and does another, that one wishes to go to one place and in reality is going to another place, and so on. Again, this must not be taken literally, but everyone must find his own form of lack of freedom, peculiar to him. When everybody realizes that, it will be easy to speak about it. Everybody will then understand that he is a slave and will see what it is that really governs and controls him. Then it will be simple to understand that the aim is freedom; but as long as it is merely theoretical it will serve no useful purpose. It will serve our purpose of understanding what we want only if we realize this slavery individually, in our own life, through our own practical experience.

Each one of us must find in what he is not free. He wants to know – and he cannot know; either he has no time, or perhaps he has no preparatory knowledge. He wants to *be*, he wants to remember himself, he wants to 'do' in a certain way, but things happen differently, not as

he wants it. When he realizes this he will see that the aim is freedom; and to be free one must be conscious.

Q. But freedom for a few only, not for the world?

A. You can think only of yourself. You cannot give me freedom – so what is the use thinking about me? But perhaps you can help another person to find something that will help *him* to become free; but only when you get something yourself, only when you yourself have become more free.

Q. How can a man ever be free? Man is so weak and there are so many forces against him!

A. He can be more free than he is now – more free relative to his present state. Look at it from the personal point of view, not philosophically, then you will see that one can be more free or less free, because there are different moments in your life at certain moments you are less free, at other moments you are more free. When you sleep at night you are less free than in daytime, and if a fire happens when you are asleep you will die because you will not be able to get out. So in daytime you are more free. Things must be taken simply, not philosophically. Certainly, if we begin to think philosophically that there is no such thing as freedom, then there is nothing left but to die.

Q. Is it possible to determine the influences in life that destroy our freedom more than anything else?

A. The influences that increase our slavery are our illusions, and particularly the illusion that we are free. We imagine that we are free, and this makes us ten times more slaves. This is the chief influence with which we can struggle. There are many other influences which have to be struggled with, but this is the beginning, this is the first – our illusions about our position, about our freedom. So first of all it is necessary to sacrifice this illusion of freedom which we think we have. If we try to sacrifice this illusion, perhaps we shall come to the possibility of actually being more free.

Q. What meaning have ordinary values like bravery, unselfishness and cheerfulness from the point of view of the system?

A. Sometimes they have very good meaning, sometimes no meaning at all. You cannot expect a permanent meaning in such values, because ordinary views always assume words to have a permanent meaning, whereas they cannot have one.

Q. Has this system anything to say about the idea of sin?

A. Sin, in a general definition, is 'everything that is unnecessary'; but we must modify this definition. Sin is always the result of weakness. If I have to go somewhere and promise to be there at 12.30 and I know that if I walk fast I shall be there in time, but instead I stop on the way to look at shop windows, this would be sin against my promise to be there at 12:30. Everything must be taken from the point of view of aim or decision, in relation to the thing you set out to do at a given moment. If you have an aim in connection with the work, then everything you do against your own work is sin. It is not a sin if you have no aim. It is not a sin to stop at shop windows, but if you have to be somewhere at a certain time and stopping will make you late, then it is a sin. We can understand sin and crime when we understand them in relation to the work. Then we can take a slightly larger view and think of the people who are just coming into the work, and then of those who may come, and so on. It is necessary to approach this problem thinking in concentric circles and begin with people who are in the work or who think themselves in the work. Then everything they do against their own understanding of the work will certainly be sin, because they deceive themselves. And what they do against other people in the work either by suggestion or example is sin, because their aim is to help and not to hinder. So it is possible to understand sin only in relation to the work first, and then, later, to see it outside the work.

Q. What did you mean by saying that sin is the result of weakness?

A. You see, in the work requirements grow, many things gradually become more difficult.



One takes certain decisions, and one of the first is to make efforts, to go against the ordinary way which is always to avoid efforts and to make things as easy as possible. If one tries to work, one makes a decision to go against this tendency, to make things more difficult. Again, if it remains merely a mental decision, if it does not lead to any action, it is nonsense and is certainly sin against oneself.

Q. Can you go from the word 'sin' to the word 'repentance'? I take it that repentance is something quite different from the usual conception of it?

A. In the work, bad things cancel many good things, but good things do not cancel bad things. Bad things can only be cancelled by repentance. It does not at all mean that a man does something and then repents and says to himself, 'I will not do it again' because he will. If one has done a thing, the trace of it remains, so that it is easier to do it a second time, and this creates momentum. One can sometimes overcome this momentum by repentance, which means suffering.

Q. You call it repentance in so far as it does overcome momentum?

A. Repentance may be good, but not strong enough to overcome momentum. But, if it does overcome it, then it is 'repentance'. Sincere repentance is a big force in the work. Our tendencies always make us do things which are against the work. They do not necessarily assume the same form, which makes it deceptive. I could do something in one form and then follow it up not in the same form but in the same way. But if I repent rightly and at the right moment, I can stop this tendency.

Q. Then real repentance necessarily means change of being?

A. I would not call it change of being, but simply stopping a tendency.

Q. Is there no way in which we can help humanity?

A. We always start with the idea that things should be put right. But suppose some man acquires power and begins to put things right. He may make them so bad that some higher power may have to come to put them right again, and this may mean destroying the earth. This explains another thing – the difficulty of acquiring what we may call higher powers. It is as though some definite conscious mind prevents one from acquiring higher powers, because immediately one would want to abuse them. It looks as though you can get these powers only when these higher minds or conscious beings are sure that you will not interfere. But there is no conscious observer – there are laws, and they are in you. They are sort of automatic brakes in you which will prevent your interfering.

Q. What is the good of having these powers if you cannot use them?

A. Evidently at a given moment forces in the world have to fight it out among themselves, and higher powers do not want to interfere, evidently for a certain definite reason. If the positive side – the one opposed to chaos – is sufficiently strong, it will conquer. If it is weak, it has to be destroyed, and then perhaps something new will appear. There are many allusions to this idea in the Bible – or maybe they are only allegories. It all shows that things have to be fought out on one level – so there can be no interference.

Q. You said that a man has no will. Then what do you call it when a person makes a very real effort to overcome a habit, or not to do what he would like to do?

A. It is either attraction to something, or repulsion from something. Either he is afraid of something, or dislikes something, and that creates repulsion; or someone told him he could get something and that creates attraction. It is not in him, it is in things. Things either attract or repel him, but he calls it his will.

Q. You regard it as quite valueless then?

A. It is mechanical; it is of no value. It may have an objective value, in the sense that he may get something from it in the material sense. But that is not the effort I speak about. Effort begins only from one thing – the effort to awake.

Q. Can man develop consciousness by his own efforts?

A. No, he cannot do it by his own efforts alone. First of all he must have a certain knowledge, and a certain explanation of methods; and there are many other difficulties besides. Man is a machine, a machine which works under external influences. This machine of man 1, 2 and 3 does not know itself, but when a man begins to know himself he already becomes a different machine; this is how development begins. But he cannot get the necessary knowledge by himself.

Q. When you say that self-observation is the way towards self-consciousness, must one observe during the exact experience?

A. As much as one can. In the beginning it may be difficult, but very soon you will find it possible. When you realize that you can think with one part of your mind and observe with another part there will be no complication or confusion.

Q. Is the first step to try and realize completely that we know nothing at all?

A. Very useful if you can, but we cannot do that, we are so sure of many things.

Q. Is it a thing to aim at?

A. We can aim at it as much as we like, but we can never achieve it in the ordinary way. If we learn new things about ourselves, things we did not know before, then we can compare what we knew before and what we have learned now. Without comparison we can achieve nothing.

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Last time I explained the division of man into seven categories. This division, connected with the idea of man's possible evolution, gives a very good method for understanding the differences or divisions of many things. For instance, from the beginning we take different manifestations of man in different fields of activity, in religion, science, art and so on, and try to look at them from the point of view of this division into seven categories. You will see at once that if there are seven categories of man there must be, correspondingly, seven categories of everything that belongs to man. We do not know about man No. 5, 6 and 7, but we know the difference between man 1, 2 and 3, and so we can easily understand that religion of man No. 1, whatever it may be called, will be a primitive religion, simplified in all senses. Gods are simple, virtues are simple and sins are simple – everything is simple, because man No. 1 does not like to think much. Sentimental, emotional religion, full of illusions and imagination, will be the religion of man No. 2. And religion composed of theories, words and definitions for everything will be the religion of man No. 3. These are the only kinds of religion we know, although if men of higher levels exist, there must also be religion of man No. 5, religion of man No. 6 and religion of man No. 7.

It is the same with art – there is art No. 1, art No. 2 and art No. 3, and we know nothing else. But there are some works of art remaining from very old days which evidently belong to men of higher consciousness. If we find such works of art, we will see that we do not understand them, they are beyond our level. From this point of view all ordinary art, art of man No. 1, 2 and 3, is called subjective art, for it is based only on a subjective understanding or subjective feeling of things.

In science it is even easier to understand the difference. Certainly science No. 1, 2 and 3 is all we know. It uses man's present state of consciousness and present functions as an instrument for getting certain results. Science No. 4 will begin with improvement of instruments. If you have to work in any particular branch of science, you have a certain instrument for this work and get certain results. But suppose you can have a better instrument; you will immediately get better results. So science No. 4 is connected with improving the instrument of knowing, with improving man's functions and state of consciousness.

Q. Can you tell us more what man 1, 2 and 3 means?

A. This refers to the centre of gravity at moments of important decisions. Man No. 3 would act from theory, man No. 2 on the basis of emotional likes and dislikes, man No. 1 on the basis of physical likes and dislikes.

Q. To understand examples of conscious art one must have knowledge that an average person has not got?

A. Not only knowledge, but knowledge and being. There are two sides of us which must be developed. In speaking about knowledge and being it is necessary to start from the beginning. Try to think how you look at it yourself, what your attitude to those two ideas was before you met this system. We are all in the same position. We want knowledge, but we do not realize that there are obstacles in ourselves that prevent us from acquiring this knowledge.

I will start with myself. Before I met the system I read a great deal and made many experiments. From these experiments I got interesting states, understood several laws, and I naturally wanted a continuation of these states. But I saw that for this more knowledge was necessary. Then I met this system. In the system particular stress was laid on *being*. According to this system no more knowledge is possible until one's being is changed.

Soon after we heard about knowledge and being our groups divided into two camps. The first camp thought that the whole thing was change of being, that with change of being we would get more from the knowledge we already have. The second camp (to which I believe I alone belonged) said that even in our present state of being we can get much more knowledge than we have, that we are not so saturated with knowledge that we cannot absorb more.

Later I understood that both are necessary. Take an example of two men: one knows the four rules of arithmetic, the other does not. Naturally the first will be in a better position, although their level of being is the same. The more a man knows about mathematics, the better is his position in a certain profession. So knowledge can increase even with the same being. And he may know more not only in mathematics; he may know many other things, have more psychological knowledge.

On the other hand, you notice that you give two people knowledge (I am speaking of psychological knowledge), and one gets it, while the other cannot. Evidently his being is not prepared. So people are not in the same position in this respect.

The relationship of knowledge and being is a very big question. I want you to think about it and follow what I have just said. Try to find your own examples. Knowledge can lead very far. The question is, can one take it? Can one absorb it? One kind of knowledge we can get, another kind we cannot, so we cannot speak in general about it. For instance, take psychological knowledge: such as we are we can learn very much, and certain things can become much dearer. But every moment a man's knowledge depends on his being. This is what we do not understand. A man can get only as much knowledge as his being allows, otherwise his knowledge will be just words. If knowledge is given to several people, one of them gets it, others do not. Why? Evidently because their being is different.

Q. I do not understand clearly what 'being' is.

A. It is *you*, what you are. The more you know yourself, the more you know your being. If you have never learnt that you have being, the being of all people will be the same to you. Someone who has never heard of self-remembering, if you ask him, will say that he can remember himself. This is one being. Another knows he does not remember himself – this is a different being. A third is beginning to remember himself – this is a third being. This is how it must be taken.

We understand the difference of objects, but in ordinary thinking we do not understand the difference of being. What do we learn in this system? First that we are not one, that we have many 'I's, that there is no central 'I' in control. This is the state of our being. The result is mechanicalness – we are machines. If we manage to be less mechanical, less divided in ourselves, if we manage to have more control of ourselves, it will mean that our being has changed.

When I met this system, it showed me that change of being was necessary, because we are not what we think ourselves to be. If we were what we think we are – if we had

consciousness, will, if we could 'do', then only knowledge would be necessary. But we all think of ourselves differently from what we are in reality. And it is exactly this difference between what we are and what we think we are that shows what is lacking in our being. So two things are necessary: change of knowledge and change of being.

Q. But we are constantly changing!

A. No, we are in one room, running from one corner to another, not changing. In one corner we think we are one thing, in another we think we are different. We cannot change just because we have gone from one corner to another. What looks like change is change through imitation, change of conditions, likes and dislikes.

This state of consciousness in which we are now always moves up and down. 'Down' means that we are nearer to sleep, 'up' means that we are nearer to the possibility of awakening. We are never in exactly the same state, but these small changes only mean marking time on the same spot.

So you see, evolution of man is quite possible, but it is possible only by changing knowledge and changing being; and changing being means acquiring consciousness. It cannot come by itself, it cannot 'happen'.

Q. Does one acquire knowledge of oneself through self-observation?

A. Self-observation is connected with certain definite practices. If you just start observing how things happen, you will miss many things, but if you try to struggle against some of the things you see, for instance against small habits, you will at once begin to see many things which ordinarily you do not notice. Everyone has many small habits, habits of walking, habits of moving their hands, habits of sitting, standing, speaking in a certain way. This struggle is not for any particular results but merely for self-observation. Perhaps later you will find that you have to get rid of certain habits, but at present this struggle should be merely for self-study.

At the same time, if we want to develop consciousness and improve our functions, almost from the very beginning of self-observation we are advised to try and stop some of our functions which are not only useless but definitely harmful. For instance, in observing yourself, particularly in observing the emotional function, try to stop as much as possible all expression of negative emotions. Many people's lives practically consist of that, they express negative emotions at every possible moment, on any occasion, whether suitable or unsuitable, they can always find something wrong in everything. The chief tendency of man 1, 2 and 3 is to express immediately all his negative emotions. If he makes an effort to stop this expression it gives him material for observation, and he sees himself from quite a different angle. If he makes serious efforts in this direction, very soon he will become convinced that he has no will, because it is a most difficult thing to stop this expression of negative emotions. At the same time it is necessary.

Another useless function is talk, we talk too much. We talk and talk and talk, and we never really notice it. Generally we think we talk very little, much too little, but particularly those people who talk most think that they never talk. This is a very useful subject for watching. You will see how your day passes, how many mechanical things you say in certain conditions, how many other mechanical things in other conditions. Or you will notice that you just talk and talk because it gives you pleasure, or fills your time. It is necessary to watch it and stop at least some of this unnecessary talk. Talk, imagination, lying and expressing negative emotions are in fact our chief functions.

Now if you want to ask me anything I will try to explain. We must try not only to study these ideas in the form in which they are given but also to apply them in connection with different problems. They give good keys for the solution of many of them.

Q. When you speak about lying are you referring to what we say or to our thoughts too?

A. At present it is quite enough to take only what we say. Later we shall have to study our

thoughts too – that would be lying to ourselves. It is the same thing, but we have to begin with the actual things we say, and in the beginning lying will need a certain effort to verify. It is always speaking about things we do not know. We do not call it lying – that is our escape, we give it some good name, and then we can accept it.

Q. I should like to know more exactly what is meant by being. I understood it is something more permanent as opposed to a sort of shifting collection of ‘I’s.

A. Do not make it too complicated. All of you is your being. Knowledge is separate. You can visualize separately all that you know, but all that you *are*, apart from what you know, is your being. In this division you consist of two things: what you know and what you are. From the point of view of development, the idea is that work on knowledge without work on being is not sufficient. Knowledge is limited by being. In the state in which you are, if you get more knowledge you will not be able to use it, to understand it, to connect it. Development of knowledge is not sufficient, for at a certain moment it has to stop, and instead of leading you forward it will lead you backwards, because if your acquiring of knowledge is not followed by change of being, all your knowledge will become distorted in you. Then the more knowledge you acquire, the worse off you will be.

Q. What part does being play in the attainment of knowledge?

A. Being is your state. In one state you can acquire certain knowledge, but if another state develops you can acquire more knowledge. If you are divided into different ‘I’s all contradicting one another, it is very difficult to acquire knowledge because each part will acquire it by itself and understand it by itself, so you will not have much understanding. If you become one, then certainly it would be easier to acquire knowledge, to remember it and understand it. Being means state, inner conditions, all together, not separate.

Q. Does not our being grow with knowledge?

A. No, being cannot grow by itself. Knowledge, even very good knowledge, cannot make being grow. You have to work on knowledge and being separately, otherwise you will cease to understand the knowledge you acquire. Work on being is different work – a different effort is necessary.

Generally speaking, we know more about our knowledge than we know about our being. We know how little we know about ourselves; we know how, at every moment, we make mistakes about everything; we know how we cannot foresee things, how we cannot understand people, how we cannot understand things. We know all that and realize that it is all the result of our insufficient knowledge. But we do not understand the difference between people’s being. It is useful to take a piece of paper and write down what constitutes our being. Then you will see that it cannot grow by itself. For instance, one feature of our being is that we are machines; another – that we live in only a small part of our machine; a third – this plurality that was spoken about in the first lecture. We say ‘I’, but this ‘I’ is different every moment. We have many ‘I’s all on the same level and there is no central ‘I’ in control. This is the state of our being. We are never one and never the same. If you write down all these features you will see what would constitute a change of being, and what can be changed. In each particular feature there is something that can change; and a little change in one feature means also a change in another.

The more you know yourself, the more you know your being. If you do not know yourself, you do not know your being. And if you remain on the same level of being you cannot get more knowledge.

Q. In order to work on being, is it necessary for us to occupy all our time during the day, not to have any spare time?

A. You begin with the impossible. Begin with the possible; begin with one step. Try to do a little, and results will show you. There is always a limit, you cannot do more than you can. If you try to do too much, you will do nothing. But, little by little, you will see that right

thinking, right attitudes are necessary. It needs time, because for so long people have been in the power of negative emotions, negative imagination, lying, identification, and things like that. But little by little these will disappear. You cannot change everything at once.

You must always think about the next step – only one step. We can understand the next step as being a little more collected than now. When we have understood that, we can think of it as being still more collected – but not completely, not finally.

Q. Shall we be able to judge the change of our being without deceiving ourselves?

A. Yes, but before you are able to judge the change, you must know your being as it is now. When you know most features of your being, you will be able to see changes. We can judge the level of our being by the instability of our ‘I’ – what we call ‘I’ – because one moment one part of us says ‘I’, another moment another part. If you observe well, you will find how different you are, even in the course of one day. One moment you decide to do one thing, another moment another thing. It is this constant changing even in the course of twenty-four hours that really shows the level of our being.

Q. On what does the difference in level among ordinary sleeping people depend?

A. On reliability. There are more reliable people and less reliable people. This is also true in the work. Unreliable people cannot get much.

Q. Do we all start on the same level?

A. More or less, but there are variations. The chief thing is reliability.

Q. How does one develop one’s being?

A. All that you have learnt, all that you have heard about the possibility of development, all refers to being. First of all, development of being means awakening, since the chief feature of our being is that we are asleep. By trying to awake we change our being; this is the first point. Then there are many other things: creating unity, not expressing negative emotions, observation, study of negative emotions, trying not to identify, trying to avoid useless talk – all this is work on being. It is true that in this way you acquire certain knowledge, but if it is simply intellectual knowledge it is put separately. Being is power, power to ‘do’, and power to ‘do’ is power *to be different*.

Q. I do not understand this distinction of knowledge and being working together. It seems that in self-study they are so mixed that it is hard to see which is which.

A. Yes, but at the same time it is possible. We know what knowledge means. We know that knowledge is relative and depends on our capacities, Actually we can acquire a sufficient amount of knowledge to start with in our present state; but very soon we realize that in order to acquire more knowledge, deeper or larger knowledge, of things we really want to understand, we must change our being, for our present capacities for acquiring knowledge are very limited. So even from the point of view of acquiring knowledge we come to the necessity of changing being, otherwise we will only have words and will not know what they mean.

Q. Have the ideas of the system any value from the point of view of change of being?

A. Ideas by themselves cannot produce change of being; your effort must go in the right direction, and one thing must correspond to another. You make an effort on one line and you must make an effort on the other line. You can change nothing without a system; even with a system it is difficult.

Q. What is meant by ‘work’?

A. ‘Work’ in the sense we use this word in the system means work for acquiring knowledge and for the study of change of being. You have to have some clear objective and work for it, so ‘work’ includes acquiring knowledge and self-control in order to reach your objective.

Q. Why has nature made man incomplete, left him half-way?

A. It is a good question only as long as you do not understand what a man can acquire. When you do, you will realize that those things can only be acquired by man’s own efforts. What can be developed in man is consciousness and will, and they can be developed only if man

realizes that he does not possess them. When he realizes that, he will see that they can only be got, not given. Man is created in the only way he can be created. All that can be given is given; no more can be given. Otherwise it would be the same as to take a man from the street and make him a general; he would not know what to do. This is a subject for discussion; we cannot be given those qualities, we must earn or buy them. This is the only way to acquire them.

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Real knowledge, objective knowledge is knowledge which comes from higher mind. Such knowledge shows us how to study man, how to study the universe, and also how to study the one in relation to the other. With objective knowledge it is possible to know the real world by making use of the principles of relativity and scale and by knowing the two fundamental laws of the universe: the Law of Three and the Law of Seven.

The approach to objective knowledge is through the study of objective language. You remember, I said that the study of this system begins with the study of a new language, and I gave you several examples: centres, division of man into No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and so on, identifying, considering, self-remembering. These are all expressions of this language.

The next step is the study of oneself, the study of the human machine, and the understanding of man's place in the universe. This knowledge of oneself is both an aim and a means.

But as I said, if a man wants to develop, knowledge alone is not sufficient; he must also work to change his being. Only, change of being is so difficult that it would be almost impossible if knowledge were not there to help him. So knowledge and being must grow side by side, though the one is quite separate from the other. Neither knowledge nor being separately can give right understanding, because understanding is the resultant of a simultaneous growth of knowledge and being.

Growth of knowledge means a transition from the particular to the general, from details to the whole, from the illusory to the real. Ordinary knowledge is always a knowledge of details without knowledge of the whole, a knowledge of leaves, or the veins and serrations of the leaves, without knowing the tree. Real knowledge not only shows a given detail but the place, the function and the meaning of this detail in relation to the whole.

Q. If knowledge exists on different levels, then we can only have the knowledge belonging to our level?

A. Quite right, but if we had all the knowledge that we could get on our level, our level would change. The point is, we do not have all the knowledge possible to us on our level – we have too little.

Q. Is knowledge only given in direct connection with the work?

A. From the very beginning you are given certain ideas and told certain things about the human machine; for instance, about the four functions, about different states of consciousness, about the fact that we live in a state which goes up and down, sometimes nearer to self-consciousness, sometimes nearer to sleep. When you heard this you were also told to prove it for yourselves. If you only hear about these things, or read about them, they remain merely words. But when you begin to verify them for yourselves, when you understand each function in yourselves and find out your own feelings and sensations connected with each of them, then it becomes knowledge.

Being is something quite separate. You can make all possible efforts in your present state, yet you will feel that there is more to be got out of your knowledge, but your being is not adequate. So it is necessary to work on being, make it stronger, more definite. Then from the same words you will be able to extract more knowledge.

Q. If understanding is the resultant of knowledge and being, I cannot see how they combine.

A. Any moment you understand something, your understanding is a combination of your

knowledge and your being. Understanding is the result of experience: a certain experience in being and a certain experience in knowledge.

Q. It is still not clear to me what you mean by being and state of being.

A. Instead of looking for definitions, try to find illustrations. The being of a man is all that he is. Many things enter into being. You can be more conscious or more asleep, more divided or more whole, more interested in some things and less interested in other things; you can lie more or lie less, dislike lying or lie without any embarrassment, be more consistent or less consistent, have a feeling of mechanicalness or not; you may have no great conflicts in yourself or you may consist of conflicts, have comparatively few negative emotions or be immersed in negative emotions. Generally, state of being means a greater or lesser consecutiveness of actions. When one thing contradicts another too much, it means weak being. We do not realize that if a man is very inconsistent it makes his knowledge unreliable. Development of one line only, either knowledge or being, gives very bad results.

Being includes all your power to 'do'. Knowledge is only auxiliary; it can help. But in order to change our being – and this is where knowledge comes in – we must first realize and understand our present state. As we begin to understand the state of our being, we begin to learn what to do with ourselves.

Q. What did you mean when you said that development of either knowledge or being alone gives bad results?

A. It may help if I tell you how I first heard about it. If knowledge develops beyond being, the result will be a 'weak yogi' – a man who knows everything and can do nothing. If being develops beyond knowledge, the result is a 'stupid saint' – a man who can do everything and does not know what to do.

If you compare this system with others you will find that it is precisely in the importance it gives to this idea of being that it differs from other systems, philosophical and otherwise. Other systems are concerned with knowledge or conduct. They assume that, such as we are, we can know more or behave differently. In religious systems 'faith' and 'conduct' are generally regarded as being voluntary. One can be good or bad – it is arbitrary. But this system has the idea of different levels of being. On our present level of being there is one knowledge, one conduct, one faith, all determined by being. But first comes knowledge – how little we know. You begin to study yourselves: you realize that you are machines but that you can become conscious. The machine starts on a certain level of being. All it can or cannot do is dependent upon this level. Try to understand what is meant by being, levels of being, change of being. This system says that everything – forces, energies, different kinds of activity, they all depend on the level of being. We cannot know more because of our level of being. At the same time the slightest difference in the level of being opens up new possibilities for knowledge and for 'doing'. All our powers are determined by our level of being.

Q. I understood we were all on the same level?

A. Yes, in comparison with man No. 4. But there are people who are further away from the level of man No. 4 and others who are nearer to it. As in everything else there are degrees. There is a big distance between the two levels, but there are intermediate states. It is the same in ourselves: each of us can be different at different moments.

There is a slight difference between people, but it is not enough to measure being. All normal people are born on the same level and have the same possibilities. No one can be born higher than the ordinary level. We cannot attain anything without special training. The slight differences between people are differences in functions, but real difference of being is difference of state of consciousness. Difference in functions is a one-sided difference.

Q. Could you explain more about the degrees that exist between us and man No. 4? I want to understand.



A. This is a right question; and you can understand it by observing other people and yourself. There are men No. 1, 2 and 3 who are not at all interested in the possibility of development or in acquiring knowledge, or in anything like that. Then there are those who have the possibility of a certain understanding, but it moves from one thing to another – it is not a directed interest. Then there may be directed interest, the beginning of magnetic centre, meeting with influence C and so on. So man 1, 2 and 3 can be very different – he may be nearer to possibilities of development, further from these possibilities, or even without any possibilities.

Q. How can one understand other people's knowledge unless one is on the same level?

A. Do you mean who can teach, whom one can trust and so on? On the level where we are we can judge about people's knowledge, but not about their being. We can see without mistake who knows more. But about being mistakes are easily possible. Suppose you meet someone who knows more than you do but you suspect that his being is lower. You will be wrong, because it is not your business to Judge his being. Leave his being alone, and try to learn from him. We are not capable of seeing levels of being higher than our own; we can judge about the level of being only on the same level as ours or lower. It is important to remember this principle.

Q. Is this system a system of knowledge?

A. This system is not so much a system of knowledge as a system of thinking. It shows how to think differently, what to think differently means, why it is better to think differently. To think differently means to think in different categories.

One thing is in our way – we do not know what it means 'to know'. We must try to understand what to know means; this will help us to understand what it means to think in new categories.

Q. What is the origin of this system?

A. I will not speak of details, but of the principle – of what must be its origin in principle. To serve a useful purpose, to have any weight, a teaching must come from men of a higher mind than ours, otherwise it will not help and we will remain on the same level. If a teaching comes from a higher level, we can expect something. If it comes from the same level as ours, we can expect nothing. We have enough material for evaluation. We can ask ourselves: was it invented on the same level as ours or on a different level? If the amount of material we have does not enable us to judge, we must wait. But only we ourselves must judge. If I say anything about it, you cannot verify it. It is useful to think about this; only you must find answers for yourselves.

Q. Has it been handed down for ages?

A. How can you verify it?

Q. I will take your word for it.

A. You must not believe anything.

Q. Can you tell us where to look for its origin and traces?

A. In yourself. Has it given you something you did not have before?

Q. Surely it is impossible to understand the system until one reaches the level it was originated on?

A. Understanding is relative. We can understand many things on our level: only then can we move on. We cannot jump. Certainly with the help of this system we can understand better about ourselves and about life than with any other system I know. If we can say that we got from it what we could not get in any other way, then we must continue to study it. We must have valuation. After a very short time one can tell. Personally, I learnt very much from this system in a short time and, with its help, I even began to understand things I had met with in other systems and had not understood. For instance, take 'sleep' in the New Testament. People do not notice it, yet it is constantly spoken of there, it is constantly said that people are asleep, but can awake, though they will not awake without efforts. The system explains not

only itself but also what is true in other systems. It explains that if people want to understand one another, understanding is possible only among people who are awake. In ordinary life everything is a hopeless tangle; people are not meant to understand one another in ordinary life. If that were meant, people would be created differently. Man must complete himself by his own efforts. We can realize this if we realize the nature of will and consciousness. Capacity to understand is connected with this. If people begin to work with the aim of gaining consciousness and will, they will begin to understand one another. In life, with the best intentions, there are only blunders. People are machines: they are not made to understand one another.

Q. Is it possible to understand the reason of this muddle? What is the purpose of being made so?

A. To see the danger and to try and begin to understand our situation. People never understood one another, but in our time the situation in life is becoming more and more complicated and dangerous. At the same time, such as they are, people serve the purposes of the moon and the earth. But of this we will speak later.

It is a mistake to think of our times as being like any other. Now there are exceptional difficulties and exceptional facilities.

Q. The difficulties are likely to be increased with time?

A. Yes, but not beyond a certain limit – beyond this limit it becomes an impossibility. It is important to realize, not in theory but through seeing facts, that people do not understand one another and that the situation is becoming more and more complicated. If people have machine-guns, it is more dangerous. And they have machine-guns in many senses. So each misunderstanding becomes more deep and more complicated.

Q. What is the end?

A. We cannot say; that would be fortune-telling. Certainly we cannot expect any good from that.

You see, all our ordinary views of things are no good, they do not lead anywhere. It is necessary to think differently, and this means to see things we do not see now, and not to see things we see now. And this last is perhaps the most difficult, because we are accustomed to see certain things: it is a great sacrifice not to see the things we are accustomed to see. We are accustomed to think that we live in a more or less comfortable world. Certainly there are unpleasant things, such as wars and revolutions, but on the whole it is a comfortable and well-meaning world. It is most difficult to get rid of this idea of a well-meaning world. And then we must understand that we do not see things themselves at all. We see like in Plato's allegory of the cave only the reflections of things, so that what we see has lost all reality. We must realize how often we are governed and controlled not by the things themselves but by our ideas of things, our views of things, our picture of things. *This* is the most interesting thing. Try to think about it.

The above text constitutes Chapter II of *The Fourth Way* by P. D. Ouspensky.