

CHAPTER IV

Language – Different divisions used in the system – Essence and personality – A, B and C influences – Magnetic centre – Wrong magnetic centre – Deputy Steward – Law of accident – Law of fate – Law of will – Law of cause and effect – Escape from the law of accident – Centre of gravity – Why schools are necessary – For whom schools are necessary – What constitutes a school – Degrees of schools – Way of Fakir, Way of Monk and Way of Yogi – The Fourth Way – Difference between the Fourth Way and the traditional ways – All ways lead to the same goal – Level of school depends on the level of students – Inner circles of humanity.

THE STUDY OF THE METHODS USED IN THIS SYSTEM by which man can come to a higher consciousness begins with the study of a new language. This language is based on different principles which you do not know yet; but as you go on with your study you will very soon begin to understand them. With this language it is possible to come nearer to truth, possible to speak with greater precision than we do now, and two people who understand this language will never misunderstand each other in simple things. You have already heard certain expressions of this language, such as self-remembering, identifying, considering and so on. It is very important to understand the different divisions the system uses, which are part of this language. Man is a very complicated machine and he can be studied in divisions. In ordinary language we do not use these divisions and so people do not understand one another.

Try to understand what I am saying, because it is rather difficult to express. If you take a town, you can understand that it can be divided into north, south, east and west; it can be divided into districts and quarters, and then divided into different streets. It can also be studied from the point of view of its population, for it has people of different nationalities, people of different professions, belonging to different classes and so on. None of these divisions will coincide with one another, each must be studied separately. You cannot make a general map, including them all – you must make a series of different maps.

It is the same with man. For instance, I have already given you certain divisions. The first is the division of centres or functions, so that each man consists of four men, each living his own life in the same man, with his own associations, his own likes and dislikes. Then I showed you the division into different 'I's. This is a very useful division; man is not one, he is plural, a crowd, consisting of people who do not know one another and who fight with each other. This division into many 'I's was supplemented by the different roles a man plays in different circumstances. Then there was the division into knowledge and being – what a man knows and what he is. I have also given you the division of man into seven categories: man No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Now we come to another, a quite different division, not parallel with any of the others – the division into essence and personality. Essence is what is born in you, personality is what you acquire. Essence is your own, personality is not your own. All man's inner life, all his perceptions and reactions are divided into those two parts. There are certain things which are born with you, such as certain physical features, state of health, certain kinds of predispositions, inclinations, tendencies and so on. They belong to essence. Personality is what you acquire in the course of your life: views, opinions, words. It is easier to understand the difference between essence and personality if you find some examples. Although the two are always mixed in life, it is easier to distinguish personality and essence in other people than in oneself, because personality changes very often with the change of conditions, but essence remains the same. This division is very important to understand, because many things that we speak about in man refer to essence, while others refer to personality.

Q. If essence is what we are born with, can it be added to? Can it increase?

A. Yes, but it can be done only if personality becomes educated and ceases to press upon essence. Personality is too heavy, too strong; it surrounds essence like a shell, so nothing can reach it directly, everything has to pass through personality. Essence cannot grow in these conditions, but if personality becomes more transparent, impressions and external influences will penetrate through it and reach essence, and then essence will begin to grow.

Q. So a strong personality prevents impressions from reaching one's essence?

A. Yes, but what does a strong personality mean? It means a strong influence of what is not your own, of what you have acquired – other people's words, other people's views and theories. They can form such a thick crust round essence that nothing can penetrate it to reach you, to reach what you are.

Q. Is it possible to break this shell or destroy it?

A. Before destroying this shell of personality, or breaking it, it is necessary to prepare other defences. If for some reason this shell falls off, people find themselves without any defences against many very difficult influences which they cannot control. Personality keeps you from certain distant influences; if you weaken it, you will be under many influences which could not reach you before, so you will have even less control than you have now. But there are many things which we could control and do not control now. This is the right way of thinking about it.

Q. Can you give an example of such influences?

A. For instance, a simple example would be atmospheric changes or the change of seasons – they affect essence very much, and if one is surrounded with personality one is less affected. Change of seasons is a very serious thing for people whose essence is more open to influences. I give you this simply as an example of things that people do not take into account and about which they have no idea. There are many other things; for instance, old books on magic warn people about how dangerous this is and how one must be prepared beforehand; and in many cases they are right, because the opening up of essence may be good, but it may be accompanied by many dangers. Personality is created on many wrong bases, but it is also a kind of defence.

Q. Is it possible for us to go through life without ever observing essence?

A. It depends whether it is in school work or not. In ordinary life we do not even know about the existence of those two principles. In self-study one is told of this division, but essence and personality are so mixed that for a long time this division remains theoretical, for it is impossible to say which is which by observation, except in extreme cases. Then, as one works, one gradually begins to see that one thing is more ingrained, goes deeper, another less. In this way, little by little, one can see essence. All permanent or more permanent qualities must depend on essence. When personality is educated and becomes less heavy, many qualities pass into essence and become permanent. This is how essence develops. In personality things jump up and disappear, but what passes into essence remains.

Q. Is essence more or less the same as being?

A. It cannot be put like that. Being is life, it is a process. Essence is an object.

Q. Is essence in a child more developed than personality?

A. At a certain very early age essence may be stronger than personality, but they are both undeveloped. And there are different children and different circumstances.

Q. How can we struggle against personality?

A. It is not a question of struggle but only of controlling and educating. Personality must not have too much freedom. It must be educated in a certain way, act according to certain principles, work in a certain direction. At present our personality is all wrong. There is too much lying, deceiving oneself, imagination, negative emotions. All these things must be put right; only then can the machine work as it should. We have to work through personality; for a long time essence can have no practical meaning for us. If we begin to work on it

consciously, certain things will influence essence, but not at once.

Q. Can we do what we want with personality?

A. If you work, if you study, you will gradually change it and your work on personality will reflect on essence. Either *you* control personality, or personality is controlled by thousands of different 'I's, each of whom has its own ideas, its own views and desires. We must realize what an enormous work it is to acquire unity when, as we are now, one part decides to work and another part does not know about it or does not agree. When you have educated your personality, when it has become obedient to your aim and begins to serve it, then it is useful and right. But if you have an aim in a certain part of you and your personality works against this aim, then, naturally, it is not right.

Q. It was said that there is good in personality as well as in essence, but I cannot find anything in it useful for my ultimate aim.

A. What do you mean when you say there is no good in personality? Even if you observe and find out things about yourself, it is good. This too is in personality. The part that wishes to know, to work, to change is part of personality. There may be many things that are wrong in our personality, and these things have to be studied and eliminated. Personality is developed by study and by diminishing useless functions. Through this it becomes better and cleaner. In school conditions essence must be more important than personality, and if personality dominates it too much, development becomes impossible, because real development is in essence, and if personality hangs too heavily on it essence cannot breathe. But personality is also very important. The possibility of change is really very complicated, because it consists of many things. There must be a certain quality in essence, for if this quality does not exist, nothing is possible; there must be certain material, certain acquisitions in personality, and there must be a certain kind of circumstances.

Q. Has personality to allow itself to be second? Does it step back of its own accord?

A. It does not step back, it becomes different. If it oppresses essence it is abnormal. In our present state personality is pathological, unhealthy. With work it simply becomes healthy.

Q. I do not understand how personality can influence essence if essence is what we are born with.

A. Take the intellectual centre: its contents are not born with us – thoughts, ideas, convictions, opinions, these are all acquired. As to how personality can influence essence, suppose in your personality you come to a certain conclusion, and you find yourself by observation to have some essential habit, say, some kind of unpleasant emotion that always comes up in certain circumstances. You realize that it is not useful in any sense, it wastes energy and makes your life more difficult. How can you struggle with it? You find that this negative state feeds on self-justification, that in your ordinary habitual state you always justify it and think it is somebody else's fault, or say that you did not mean it, or that people do not understand you, or something like that. This allows it to exist. If you change your point of view, if you cease justifying it and create instead a permanent idea in yourself that this emotion is wrong, that it is not justifiable, then this point of view may eventually become permanent.

Q. Does heredity count for anything in essence?

A. Heredity practically does not exist in man. Wrong qualities may be hereditary, but good qualities cannot be inherited. Animals are under different laws from man; in them good and bad qualities are equally transmitted, but in man what may be transmitted, apart from physical qualities, are only features of degeneration, otherwise there is nothing to transmit. Physical features can be inherited, but not features like self-consciousness. Essence cannot be inherited.

Q. Is the tendency to negative emotion in the essence or is it entirely acquired in personality?

A. There may be a tendency even in the essence – a certain disposition to it, but we can take it that it all refers to personality, because if there were a really strong tendency to negative

emotion in the essence it would almost mean insanity.

Q. If there are defects in essence, can they be altered?

A. Yes, but, as I said, personality must change first; essence does not change so easily. Changing features in essence is very difficult work; it needs knowledge and sufficient energy, and we are weak and have no knowledge. It is done only when it is necessary, and only with the help of school methods. Suppose one has a lazy essence and one wants to awake – one can change it after a long period of self-study, but one must have help, school help. So it is lucky for us that work on essence comes second, that we have to start with work on personality. But by working on personality we already work to a certain extent on essence. Sleep, awakening, consciousness – all this does not refer to personality, it refers to essence. So actually you work on essence from the very beginning, and personality, by changing, will produce a certain pressure on essence and change it too.

Q. Is one always born with essence?

A. Yes, but often essence remains undeveloped, on the level of a small child.

Q. Is essence the reliable part in us?

A. Even in personality there are reliable and unreliable things. For instance, imagination is unreliable. Imagining that you can swim when you cannot and knowledge of the multiplication table are both in personality; one is reliable, the other is unreliable.

Q. Does the level of being depend on growth of essence?

A. Certainly, and this is the relation between them. Only you cannot measure being in that way, for the division into essence and personality is at present merely theoretical. But it is useful to remember that these two principles are in you, because, as I said, if you do not know this division it will prevent you from understanding certain other things you will hear.

One thing you must realize about essence and personality is that essence is one, whereas personality consists of several groups of 'I's. So we can say that we have not a personality but personalities in the plural, for there are five or six, sometimes ten personalities in one person. Magnetic centre, for instance, is also in personality, for we are not born with it – it is created in life. It is a group of 'I's which can, to a certain small extent, control other groups of 'I's. Some of these personalities are all right, but some will always be in your way and have to be controlled or eliminated.

Q. What work can one do on personality?

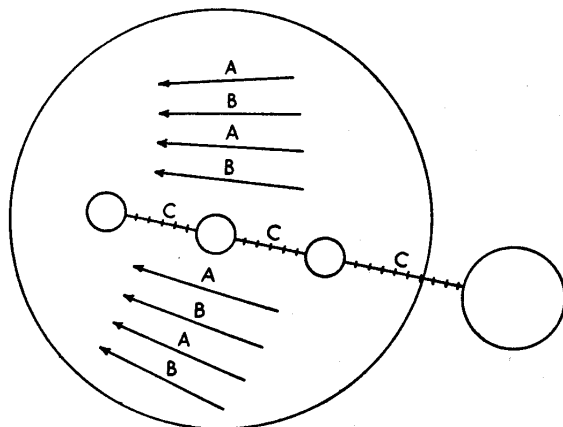
A. It can be controlled by mind. That is all that can be expected. In your mind you formulate your aim and personality must work in accordance with this aim.

Q. What is desire to awaken due to? Is it in essence?

A. This is connected with magnetic centre. You will remember that in the first lecture I spoke about magnetic centre and the different influences under which man lives. This brings us to the question of why some people are interested in these ideas, while others are not, what creates this desire to know, the energy to seek; why people who live in similar conditions are so different, for one person is satisfied with ready-made theories and clichés, while another wants to find truth for himself. What is it that explains this difference in people in relation to new ideas, for some people meet with the possibility of acquiring new knowledge and are not interested, while for others it may change the whole trend of their lives?

People come to these and similar ideas in different ways. Some understand something, others take them on an ordinary level. The cause of this difference is that man lives in mechanical life under two kinds of influences. What does it mean? It is connected with the idea explained in the beginning, that man is a machine controlled by external influences, by things around him. He may be receptive to one kind of influences and not receptive to another kind. Most of these influences are created in life itself, by people like himself. But among them, mixed with them, there are other influences which are not created in life but come from a different source, from people of a higher mind. They come in the form of religions, science,

philosophical systems, esoteric doctrines, art, all sorts of teachings, and so on. They cannot be distinguished from influences of the first kind outwardly, so it depends on the man whether he discriminates between them or not. Man can live only under influences A, that is, influences of the first kind, and disregard influences B, not be interested in them. But if he is interested in these influences of the second kind and has absorbed them in sufficient quantity, a certain process takes place in him. Results of these influences B, the memory of them, collect separately in a special compartment and form what is called a magnetic centre. Magnetic centre is a combination of certain interests and emotional associations which makes him turn in a definite direction. It is a certain cycle of ideas and a certain cycle of emotions. This is the origin of interest in this kind of ideas.



Q. If we are mere machines, are we to conclude that you are trying to lead us, machines, in a certain desirable direction, or are we capable of discriminating between truth and falsity? If so, with what faculty?

A. With magnetic centre. Men *are* machines, there is no question about that; only they are not quite the same machines as an engine or something of that kind. You have heard already that man can live in four states of consciousness, but that in ordinary life he lives only in two. These two other states of consciousness can be developed in man, but they cannot develop by themselves, they have to be developed through knowledge and effort. And the faculty that helps man to understand and discriminate is the magnetic centre.

Now we are speaking about man before he meets a school. He lives in life under ordinary conditions. Conditions may be very different, but, in any conditions, he lives under the two kinds of influence I was speaking about. What are influences A? All interests of life, struggle for existence, desires, excitements, possessions, riches, amusements and so on. They are created without intention and are mechanical both in their origin and their action. But at the same time man also lives under influences originally created in schools but thrown into the general turnover of life. These influences B are as it were a life apart. They are arranged for a certain purpose, to serve as 'lights on the way'. The rest depends on man himself. All his interests may concentrate only on influences of the first kind, or part of him may remain interested in influences created in life, while another part may be interested in this other kind of influences. If a man notices and studies them, they may accumulate in him. The memory of these interests may begin to collect in him from a very early age and form a certain group of 'I's out of the many 'I's in him. After some time this group of 'I's or magnetic centre begins to control and determine his general direction in life and the trend of his interests, or of a part of his interests. Magnetic centre means looking for definite things and being on the level of certain things.

But if a man does not notice these influences, they will produce no effect. This is why

people are so different. One person may be very intellectual, may have studied philosophy, art and so on and at the same time he has no chance if he has no magnetic centre. If he comes in contact with a school, he will not recognize it. And another man may be insufficiently educated, may not have read so much, may not know so many words, yet if he meets a school he may become interested at once.

Q. What makes us different in this sense?

A. It is a combination of what we are born with and outside circumstances that makes us what we are, it is all mechanical, all under the law of accident. It is useless to deny that people are born different; but that we cannot change, in any case in the beginning. We have to take it for granted that people have different capacities, but not for awakening, this is where people make a mistake. Awakening does not depend on what is born, it depends on the magnetic centre, and magnetic centre depends on what one is interested in. One person is interested in one thing and another in another thing, but on what *that* depends we do not know and it will not help us to investigate this question, because it will only be theories. In our state of consciousness we can only know some things and we must concentrate on the things we can know without wasting time on the things we cannot know.

Q. Does not our magnetic centre depend very largely on mechanical causes?

A. Not quite. As I said, it is a certain combination of interests, and not only interests but also of ideas a man has acquired, a certain knowledge, a certain understanding. It all enters into the magnetic centre. It is mechanical like everything else, but influences B are different in their nature, although in the beginning they come mechanically. This is not important. The important point is whether there is interest in B influences or not. This is how out of mechanicalness comes struggle with mechanicalness. Magnetic centre helps a man to see, understand and distinguish certain things. A man cannot appreciate the difference between ideas, he cannot say which is better and which worse, which suits him, which does not suit him, without the help of magnetic centre. Accumulation of knowledge does not help to create a magnetic centre; magnetic centre is good taste with the help of which a man can have a new evaluation of the ideas that come his way. The question is, in this stream of life, to distinguish the two kinds of influences, to feel the difference between them. If a man does not feel it, if he takes influences B in the same way as influences A, then they produce the same effect and magnetic centre is not formed.

Then, there are many dangers, because some of these ideas which make up the second kind of influences are so distorted that they can form a wrong magnetic centre. Magnetic centre must be very uniform and very sane to lead somewhere, otherwise it is only an embarrassment and nothing else.

Q. How does one know whether one is under influences B?

A. Influences B are always there. They come originally from the inner circle of life, from that part of life which has become free from the law of mechanicalness, but they may pass through many stages before they reach man and may be so distorted and so disguised that it is difficult to recognize them, just as it is difficult to recognize ideas of an esoteric origin which come to us in the form of legends and myths, or even superstitions and things like that. Sometimes they have an esoteric origin and then they are influences B.

Q. Suppose one only imagines that one is working under influences B?

A. One does not know about it and one does not 'work' under influences B. One can be interested in influences B just for one's own personal advantage, profession, fame or something like that; then one loses all the profit one can get from them. But if a man values them for themselves, not selfishly, not only for his own gain, if he is interested in their meaning, then he may get something from them. Definitions are very difficult and mostly wrong, for our ordinary language has so many different associations that sometimes a more precise definition spoils the possibility of understanding. For instance, you can say, though I do not

guarantee that it will always be right, that the chief characteristic of influence A is that it is always selfish, whereas influence B is unselfish. But people understand these words so differently that it does not convey much. You can also say that influences A need identification and influences B can exist without identification and that if there is identification with influences B it spoils them. In fact, the more identification there is with influences B, the more they become influences A. But all this is not sufficient to explain the difference between them.

Q. Is total immersion in influences B and complete rejection of influences A a correct attitude to life? Can we altogether dispense with influences A?

A. Why should we? Influences A may be quite legitimate interests in life. If you do not disappear in them they are quite harmless. One has to accept everything that comes, only not identify. Influences A are not dangerous in themselves, only identification is dangerous. So there is no question of dispensing, there is only the question of having some interest in influences B, of not being entirely under the power of influences A. If people have an interest in these influences B, they have a magnetic centre; if not, they have no magnetic centre.

After some time, with the help of magnetic centre, a man may find a school, or if he comes near one he may recognize it. But if he has no magnetic centre, he will not notice it, or will not be interested. And if he meets a school or a man who transmits another kind of influence, influence C, magnetic centre helps him to recognize this new influence and absorb it. If he has not first absorbed enough influences B, and so has no magnetic centre, or if his magnetic centre is wrong or too weak, a man will not recognize influence C. Or he may meet a wrong school and have wrong instruction and instead of becoming better become worse; instead of acquiring, lose. Influence C differs from influences B in that it is conscious, instead of being accidental, both in its origin and its action, whereas influences B are conscious in their origin but accidental or mechanical in their action. Influence C is school influence.

Q. Must one be adult to recognize C influence?

A. There is no general rule about age. But one must have enough experience, enough temptations from influences A and enough time to accumulate influences B. Otherwise influence C will serve as influence B; in other words, it will do the work of a more simple instrument and will not have its full value. When people have tried and have realized that ordinary means do not satisfy them, do not give them what they want, they value influences C. But if they come before that, they take influences C on the same level as the other influences and influences C lose their power. It is very important to understand that.

Q. When you recognize influence C, is it bound to be the right one for you?

A. No, not at all, you may be right or wrong, it depends on your magnetic centre. If the magnetic centre is right, you are bound to recognize the right things; if it is wrong, you may find quite a wrong school. This happens every day. Why do so many quite unfounded and wrong schools exist, with no material whatever? Because people have a wrong magnetic centre. The case is possible, for instance, when a man with a wrongly formed magnetic centre may come upon a school which pretends to be connected with esotericism, while in actual fact no such connection exists. In this case influences which should have been influences of the third kind become influences *of the first kind*, that is, leading nowhere.

Q. Isn't there a way in which one can find out?

A. Only by results. But even if people have wrong results, if they have a wrong magnetic centre they persuade themselves that the results are good. One can deceive oneself about anything.

Generally speaking, there is very little chance of finding a right school and many possibilities of wrong schools, because a school must have influences C, that is, ideas that come direct from higher mind. What does 'direct' mean? It means coming not through books, not through ordinary learning accessible to everybody. These ideas must come from another school, and to that school again from another school, and so on, until one comes to the

original source. If there are no ideas of that kind, it is only an imitation school. This does not mean that a school must be directly connected with the source, but it must at a certain time have received this kind of ideas, and then people can work on them. But if it has no ideas different from ordinary ideas, it is not a school; then, at best, it is a school on the level of B influences, that is, a philosophical or scientific school. It can be called a school only if, through it, one may be able to find the direction towards becoming man No. 4 (although there is no guarantee of attaining it). So, through the school you can find the right direction only if you have a right kind of school. If you come to a wrong kind of school you lose what you can learn by yourself.

Q. What becomes of magnetic centre when one has come to a school?

A. We can say that it becomes that part of a man which is interested in school work. It lives on influences B, but now it receives better material, more concentrated knowledge than before. Besides, many things a man has learned before may be useful to him when he has joined a school, particularly after he has thrown away all that is useless. In ordinary life man does not know what to learn and what to discard. For instance, many things in which people believe have no meaning, but a man often cannot recognize this and takes them all on the same level – both those that have meaning and those that have not. But in studying himself according to school methods he learns to recognize imaginary values in himself and, through this, to discover imaginary values outside himself. And then, much later, after long work, the group of “’s or the personality which was the magnetic centre develops into ‘deputy steward’.

When the magnetic centre is right and a man meets with true influence C, it begins to act on the magnetic centre. And then, at this point, man becomes free from the law of accident. The bigger the magnetic centre the more man is free from the law of accident. This means that he becomes free from this law only at the point through which he is connected with influence C.

Q. You said that, after bringing us into contact with the system, magnetic centre becomes deputy steward; is he the seed of permanent ‘I’?

A. What was magnetic centre before you met the work may later become deputy steward, which means a personality that conquers other personalities and leads them – but that does not come at once. Deputy steward is much higher than magnetic centre. Magnetic centre forms itself from B influences, while deputy steward is formed from one’s efforts. Magnetic centre is the seed, the germ of deputy steward.

Q. What is meant by the law of accident?

A. The life of man-machine, of man who cannot ‘do’, who has no will or choice, is controlled by accident, for things in ordinary life happen mechanically, accidentally; there is no reason in them. And just as man’s external life is controlled by accidental external influences, so is his inner life also controlled by both internal and external influences which are equally accidental. You will understand that, if you realize what it means that man is asleep, that he cannot ‘do’, cannot remember himself; when you think of the constant unconscious flow of thoughts in man, of day-dreaming, of identifying and considering, of mental conversations that go on in him, of his constant deviation towards the line of least resistance. People think that accidents are rare, but in actual fact most things that happen to them are accidental.

What does accident mean? It means a combination of circumstances which is not dependent on the will of the man himself nor the will of another person, nor on fate, as do, for instance, conditions of birth and upbringing, nor on the preceding actions of the man himself. An accident happens when two lines of events cross one another. Suppose a man stands under the roof of a house, sheltering from rain, and a brick falls and hits him on the head. This would be an accident. There are two separate lines of cause and effect. Take the line of the man’s movements and the fact that he happened to stop under the roof of that particular house; every small thing in it had a cause, but the brick did not enter into this line of cause and effect. Suppose the brick was negligently set and the rain made it loose and at a certain moment it

fell. There is nothing in the life of the man or the life of the brick to connect them. The two lines of cause and effect meet accidentally.

Q. If accidents pull the strings, what makes accidents?

A. Other accidents. Nobody makes accidents; take it in an ordinary simple way.

Things happen in human life according to three laws:

1. The law of accident, when an event happens without any connection with the line of events we observe.

2. The law of fate. Fate refers only to things with which man is born: parents, brothers, sisters, physical capacities, health and things like that. It also refers to birth and death. Sometimes things can happen in our life under the law of fate, and at times they are very important things, but this is very rare.

3. The law of will. Will has two meanings: our own will, or somebody else's will. We cannot speak of our own will, since, as we are, we have none. As regards another person's will, for the purposes of classification, every intentional action of another person may be called the result of this person's will.

In studying human life it becomes clear that these definitions are not sufficient. It becomes necessary to introduce between accident and fate the law of cause and effect which controls a certain part of events in man's life, for the difference between events controlled by accident in the strict sense of the word and events resulting from cause and effect becomes abundantly clear. From this point of view we see a considerable difference between people in ordinary life. There are people in whose life the important events are the result of accident. And there are other people in whose case the important events of their life are always the result of their previous actions, that is, depend on cause and effect. Further observation shows that the first type of people, that is people depending on accident, never come near school work, or if they do, they leave very soon, for one accident can bring them and another can just as easily lead them away. Only those people can come to the work whose life is controlled by the law of cause and effect, that is who have liberated themselves to a considerable extent from the law of accident or who were never entirely under this law.

Q. You said that man is a machine moved by external influences. Where then does control come in?

A. There is no control. We must change to have control. Things happen all around us and we are affected by them. At every moment our life is intersected by other lines, so that accident controls most events. The action of one machine affects another machine. We are surrounded by possibilities of accident; if one does not happen, another does.

We must understand our situation. In men 1, 2 and 3 there is no control; practically everything in their life is controlled by accident. There are some things which are the results of their own actions, but they are all on the same level. Control begins on a different level, and it starts with ourselves: control of our reactions, states of consciousness, functions and so on. Then, little by little, we may come to some measure of control in the sense of avoiding one influence and approaching another. It is a very slow process.

Q. When do we cease to be under the law of accident?

A. When we develop will. To be completely free from the law of accident is very far, but there are different stages between complete freedom and our present position. In ordinary conditions accident is opposed to plan. A man who in one or another case acts according to plan escapes in these actions from the law of accident. But actions conforming to plan are impossible in ordinary life except in conditions where the combination of accidental happenings chances to coincide with the plan.

The reasons why it is impossible to fulfil a plan in life are, first of all, the absence of unity and constancy in man himself, and the new lines which continually enter man's line of actions and cross it. This can be easily verified if a man tries to follow a plan in anything that does not

happen or is opposed to the general trend of momentums operating in his life; for instance, if a man tries to remember himself, to struggle with habits, to observe himself, and so on. He will see that his plan is not being fulfilled and the result is quite different from what he intended, or that everything stops altogether and even the initial impulse and the understanding of the necessity and usefulness of these attempts vanishes. But if he continues to study himself, to make efforts, to work, he will see that his relation to the law of accident gradually changes. Our being subject to the law of accident is a definite fact that cannot be changed completely. Such as we are we will always be under a certain possibility of accident. Yet little by little we can make accidental happenings less possible.

The theory of accidents is very simple. They happen only when the place is empty; if the place is occupied, they cannot happen. Occupied by what? By conscious actions. If you cannot produce a conscious action, at least it must be filled by intentional actions. So when work and everything connected with it becomes in truth the centre of gravity of man's life, he becomes practically free from the law of accident.

Q. What do you call a centre of gravity?

A. The idea of centre of gravity can be interpreted in many different ways. It is a more or less permanent aim and the realization of the relative importance of things in connection with this aim. This means that certain interests become more important than anything else – one acquires a permanent direction, one does not go one day in one direction and another day in another; one goes in one direction and one knows the direction.

The stronger your centre of gravity, the more you are free from accident. When you change your direction every moment, then every moment something new may happen and every accident can turn you one way or another way. But if your intentional activity, such for instance as self-remembering, becomes so definite, so intense and so continual as to leave no place for accidents, accidents will be much less likely to happen, because accidents need space and time. So we have to add more causes which will produce results and in this way simply exclude accident, because the more our time is occupied with conscious work the less room will be left for accidental happenings.

Q. If one does not identify, if one does not consider, if one does not have negative emotions, would this be creating new causes?

A. Naturally. But since we always identify, always consider and have negative emotions, we cannot experience that. We must see that even to have one negative emotion less would be a new cause.

Q. How is it possible to live under two such different laws as the law of accident and the law of cause and effect?

A. I see no contradiction. Cause and effect in relation to the laws under which man lives means result of your own actions, and 'accident' means something happening to you without relation to your action.

Q. Can we direct or mould the law of accident now, or must we wait till we have full consciousness?

A. There is no question of waiting: if one waits, one never gets anything – at every moment one must do what one can. At the present moment we can to a certain extent mould the law of accident only by moulding ourselves. The more control we have of ourselves, the more the law of accident changes and, as I said, later accidents may even practically disappear, although theoretically the possibility will always remain.

Q. How do we create new causes? Does it mean making plans?

A. No, you usually make the same plans you have made all your life and expect to have new causes.

Q. I should like to know how to lessen the effect of accident upon one's work. When I make a plan for the day, it is often spoiled by people coming unexpectedly.

A. Leave such cases alone. What is important is people or 'I's in us coming in and stopping our work. For instance, a negative emotion comes in and stops work. That is what we must prevent.

Q. Accident need not always be a bad accident? It can also be a happy one, can't it?

A. Quite right. But our aim is to get rid of accident, and after some time, if we work, we may become free of both good and bad accidents. Ask yourself whether it will be better. Try to understand how much we expect from good accidents and how difficult life would become if we had to 'do' everything and if nothing 'happened'.

Q. Is one partly free from the law of accident if one is in a school?

A. No, this would be too simple. Just being there does not change anything. I have just explained that one begins to get out from under the law of accident if one acquires what we call a centre of gravity, which means that work on oneself becomes especially important, sufficiently important to occupy a big place in man's life. This creates a certain kind of balance and, little by little, dispenses with accident.

Q. Did you mean that when we are more conscious we are no longer affected by the law of accident?

A. Again, it is not being conscious that does it by itself. When inner accidents stop in us, it will make us more free from external accidents. There are too many accidental things in ourselves and, as I said, we can get rid of these accidental things only by creating a centre of gravity, a certain permanent weight, weight in the sense that it keeps us more balanced. And for this we need a school.

Q. Why are you so sure that one cannot develop except through a school?

A. There are so many difficulties. If you try to understand these difficulties you will see that without method, and without help, one cannot move – one will remain what one is, or rather one will go down, for nothing remains in the same state. If one does not develop, one goes down. In life, in ordinary conditions everything goes down, or one capacity may develop at the expense of another. All capacities cannot develop without the help of school, for system and method are necessary.

But before speaking of *why* schools are necessary it must be realized *for whom* they are necessary, because schools are not necessary at all for the vast majority of people. They are necessary only to those who already realize the inadequacy of knowledge collected by the ordinary mind and who feel that, by themselves, with their own strength they can neither resolve the problems which surround them nor find the right way. Only such people are capable of overcoming the difficulties connected with school work, and only for them are schools necessary.

And in order to understand *why* schools are necessary one must realize that the knowledge which comes from men of higher mind can be transmitted only to a very limited number of people simultaneously and that the observance of a whole series of definite conditions, without which knowledge cannot be transmitted *correctly*, is necessary.

The existence of these conditions and the impossibility of doing without them explains the necessity of an organization. The transmission of knowledge demands efforts both on the part of him who receives it and on the part of him who gives it. The organization facilitates these efforts or makes them possible. These conditions cannot come about by themselves. A school can only be organized according to a certain definite plan worked out and known long ago. There can be nothing arbitrary and improvised in schools. But schools can be of different types corresponding to different ways. I shall speak about different ways later.

Q. Can it be explained in what these conditions consist?

A. These conditions are connected with the necessity of a simultaneous development of knowledge and being. As I said before, the development of one without a corresponding development of the other gives wrong results. Schools are necessary to avoid such one-sided

development and the undesirable results connected with it. The conditions of school teaching are such that from the very first steps work progresses simultaneously along two lines, the line of knowledge and the line of being. From the first days at school a man begins to study mechanicalness and to struggle against mechanicalness in himself, against involuntary actions, against unnecessary talk, against imagination, against the expression of negative emotions, against daydreaming and against sleep. In making a step along the line of knowledge a man must make a step along the line of being. The principles of school work, all the demands made upon him, all help him to study his being and to work to change it.

Q. If there is no hope of attaining a higher degree of consciousness without a school, this would exclude so many who, through no fault of their own, never come into contact with the right school and yet who urgently desire to progress?

A. It is impossible to account for these things, because man lives to such an extent under the law of accident, and individual man is so small and insignificant. We think we are very important, but in reality we are not important at all. In order to become important we must become something first, for such as we are we are practically nothing. Who could be interested in our development except ourselves? So actually meeting a school that corresponds to one's type – for one may meet a school that does not correspond to one's type or one's development – is to a great extent a matter of luck.

Q. Would it not be a case of wanting sufficiently, for it is said, 'seek and ye shall find'?

A. With the exception of very difficult circumstances, when fate, accident and cause and effect are all going against a man, if a man really seeks he can find. He will look for a school with the help of his magnetic centre; but if magnetic centre is not formed, he cannot start.

Q. Where are the schools leading?

A. This is an interesting question because it also answers other questions about the differences in men. With the help of a school you can attain what you want, but first you must formulate what you want. A question was asked earlier about whether a school leads machines to what is good for them. If it is a real school, it will not lead machines anywhere, because machines have their own fate in the universe and no one can do anything for them. But a school can help people who are tired of being machines; it can show them the way to cease to be machines and teach them how it can be done. That is all that a school can do, and without a school it cannot be achieved.

Q. What constitutes a school?

A. Speaking generally, a school is a place where one can learn something. There can be schools of modern languages, schools of music, schools of medicine and so on. But the kind of school I mean is not only for learning but also for *becoming different*. It was explained before that nobody can work alone, without a school. Also it must be clear to you by now that a group of people who decide to work by themselves will arrive nowhere, because they would not know where to go and what to do.

So we can say that a school is an organization for the transmission to a certain number of prepared people of knowledge coming from higher mind. This is the most essential characteristic of a school. Another very important fact is the selection of students. Only people of a certain preparation and a certain level of understanding are admitted to a real school. A school cannot be open to all, it cannot be open to many. Schools can be of very different levels depending on the preparation and the level of being of the students. The higher the level of the school, the greater the demands made upon the students. So from this point of view schools are divided into degrees. There are schools where men No. 1, 2 and 3 learn how to become No. 4 and acquire all the knowledge that will help them in this change. The next degree are schools where men No. 4 learn to become No. 5. There is no need for us to speak of further degrees, since they are too far from us. But even in schools of the lowest degree the beginning of school-work already means a certain preparation. One cannot pass

straight from the absurdity of ordinary life to school. Even if a school does all that is possible to give a man something, if he is not prepared, if he does not know how to take it, it cannot be given.

Q. What does being prepared mean?

A. It is first of all necessary to be ready for any level on which one can begin, not only from the point of view of knowledge, but also from the point of view of being. One must realize one's situation, know what one cannot do by oneself, realize that one needs help, and many other things. It depends on what a person needs in a school. Nobody needs a school as such, but if one does need something, then one needs a school in order to get it. Being prepared means that one must already know oneself to a certain extent; one must know one's aim; one must know the value of one's decisions; there must be a certain elimination of lying to oneself; one must be able to be sincere with oneself.

Unfortunately C influence very often becomes B influence if people come to a school unprepared. Later, perhaps after a long time, they may hear the same things that they heard when they first came and discover a new meaning in them. Then this becomes C influence. There are many ideas which, if understood rightly, can become C influence.

Besides, one can only enter a school when one has already lost, or is prepared to lose, at least a certain amount of self-will. Self-will is the chief obstacle to entering a school, because a school means not only learning but also discipline. And some people may find discipline boring, or unnecessary.

Q. Is there a form of examination that one must pass before one can enter a school?

A. Examination is almost continuous, it goes on all the time, and not only before one enters a school but also when one is in the school.

Q. There must be a reason why some people see the possibility of change and others do not.

A. Yes, there are reasons. It is a kind of previous training of the mind. Most people have the same chance, but some accumulate material and are prepared for change, and others not. But even if they are prepared they need help and have to make efforts.

Q. Can people wish to change and find it impossible?

A. Sometimes resistance is too great; for instance, imagination may be too strong and they may refuse to give it up. Or, as I said, sometimes magnetic centre may be formed in a wrong way. There are people with two or more magnetic centres looking in different directions. Then they can never be interested in the same thing for long. But if one has a rightly formed magnetic centre, all these interests become connected and it may be a very powerful thing.

Q. You say that if people are unprepared C influence becomes B influence for them. Is it because they have nothing to judge it by?

A. Not only because of that; it is because they have no valuation of ideas, they take all ideas on the same level.

Q. Do negative emotions prevent one taking in C influence?

A. If you have a great deal of negative emotion it forms a cloud which prevents not only C influence but even A influence getting to you.

It has been established long ago that, although C influences exist, one cannot get them by oneself. This means that there is something one has to conquer in order to understand, and in order to understand more one has to conquer something else. This is why school is necessary. In school you cannot deceive yourself and it can be explained to you why you do not understand.

As I said, there are many degrees of schools. Schools that begin on the ordinary level of life are very elementary. In them there are necessarily certain rules and conditions. If one forgets them, or makes excuses for oneself, one cannot really consider oneself as being in a school.

Q. Can one be disciplined to school life without being disciplined to ordinary conventions?

A. School discipline is based on understanding – it is quite different.

Q. Isn't there a danger of taking discipline as escape from responsibility?

A. Then one will fail.

Q. To what extent can one develop being without a school?

A. No real development of being is possible without schools, or rather, it is possible to a certain extent, but it is generally incomplete. Right development of being is impossible without schools, because one cannot look after oneself, one cannot be sufficiently strict with oneself. And it is not only a question of being strict – one simply cannot remember things at the right time, one will forget or one will make things easy for oneself. If it were possible to work by oneself, schools would be a waste of time and systems would not be necessary; but since they exist, it means that it is impossible without them. One can have no plan, no system by oneself. How can one develop without a plan or system? How can any work be done? How can one get the necessary knowledge, understand one's position, know what to do? One cannot even get preliminary knowledge with which to start.

Q. Do schools necessarily contain people of higher consciousness?

A. Not contain, we cannot expect that, but, as I said, a school cannot be started without knowledge coming from men of a higher mind.

Q. Will a school help me to make decisions that will affect the future?

A. All that I can say is that what you do to-day will make to-morrow, so to-morrow depends on what you do to-day. You can change the future now – that is what must be understood. In ordinary life you cannot change anything, but when you begin to know more you have more power to change.

Schools are not all the same. For some kind of people one kind of school is necessary, for another kind of people there is another kind of school. There is no universal school for all kinds of people. This brings us to the subject of different ways. But before speaking about the ways it is necessary to realize that thousands of years ago people came to the idea that man can change, that he can acquire something he has not got. What he can acquire was expressed differently and approached from different angles, but the general idea was always the same – that man can develop, that he can acquire something new. So there were formed three ways corresponding to the division of man into man No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3.

The first way is the way of the Fakir. It is a long, difficult and uncertain way. A fakir works on the physical body, on conquering physical pain.

The second way is the way of the Monk. This way is shorter, more sure and more definite. It requires certain conditions, but above all it requires faith, for if there is no faith a man cannot be a true monk.

The third way is the way of the Yogi, the way of knowledge and consciousness.

When we speak about the three ways we speak about principles. In actual life they are seldom met with in a pure form, for they are mostly mixed. But if you know the principle, when you study school practices you can separate which practice belongs to which way. When we speak of yogis we really take only Jnana-Yoga and Raja-Yoga. Jnana-Yoga is the yoga of knowledge, of a new way of thinking. It teaches to think in different categories, not in the categories of space and time and of causality. And Raja-Yoga is work on being, on consciousness.

Although in many respects these ways are very efficient, the characteristic thing about them is that the first step is the most difficult. From the very first moment you have to give up everything and do what you are told. If you keep one little thing, you cannot follow any of these ways. So, although the three ways are good in many other respects, they are not sufficiently elastic. For instance, they do not suit our present mode of life. The Fakir is an exaggerated No. 1 man with a heavy predominance of instinctive-moving centre. The Monk is an exaggerated No. 2 man with the emotional centre developed and the others under-

developed. The Yogi is an exaggerated No. 3 man with the intellectual centre developed and the others not sufficiently developed. If only these three traditional ways existed, there would be nothing for us, for we are too over-educated for these ways. But there is a Fourth Way which is a special way, not a combination of the other three. It is different from others first of all in that there is no external giving up of things, for all the work is inner. A man must begin work in the same conditions in which he finds himself when he meets it, because these conditions are the best for him. If he begins to work and study in these conditions, he can attain something, and later, if it is necessary, he will be able to change them, but not before he sees the necessity for it. So at first one continues to live the same life as before, in the same circumstances as before. In many respects this way proves more difficult than the others, for nothing is harder than to change oneself internally without changing externally.

Then in the Fourth Way the first principle is that man must not believe anything; he must learn; so faith does not enter into the Fourth Way. One must not believe what one hears or what one is advised, one must find proofs for everything. If one is convinced that something is true, then one can believe it, but not before. This is a brief outline of the difference between the four ways.

Q. Why is it wrong to believe?

A. People believe or disbelieve when they are too lazy to think. You have to choose, you have to be convinced. You are told that you must remember yourself, but it would be wrong for you to remember yourself because you are told. First you must realize that you do not remember yourself and what it means, and then if you really realize that you need it and would like to remember yourself, you will do it in the right way. If you do it simply by copying somebody, you will do it in a wrong way. You must realize that you are doing it *for yourself*, not because somebody told you.

Q. Is the Fourth Way for any special type of man?

A. Yes, if you like – for a type of man who cannot follow the other ways.

Q. Does it take much longer?

A. It can be the shortest of all, because more knowledge enters into it. The Fourth Way is sometimes called the way of the ‘sly man’. The sly man knows about the three traditional ways, but he also knows more than they do. Suppose people in all the ways work to get into a certain state necessary for some particular work they have to do. The sly man will produce this state in the shortest time of all; but he must know how to do it, he must know the secret.

Q. What is the special meaning attached to the words ‘sly man’?

A. What do you understand by slyness?

Q. Indirectness.

A. Yes, many things one cannot get direct. This idea is very largely used in the New Testament, only it is not called being ‘sly’. There are situations that are so difficult that one cannot go straight, it is necessary to be ‘sly’.

Q. Can anybody go by the Fourth Way?

A. No, because it needs understanding and efforts. One must be prepared for making efforts.

Q. How can anybody tell whether he has got the right way for him?

A. By results. You meet a system and begin to work. After some time you must be able to say what you have got from it. It is not very difficult. Certainly in most cases it will look at first like intellectual acquisitions, for you acquire new ideas, new knowledge. But it is so arranged that acquiring new ideas in the system is connected with a certain change in understanding, in attention, in will and so on. One cannot get new ideas in a right way without a certain change.

Q. If the four ways are ways towards the same objective, what is the factor, or main quality, common to them all?

A. What is similar in all the ways is the possibility of changing being. If you think of all that makes up being, such as wrong work of centres, identification, considering, negative emo-

tions, absence of unity and so on, you will understand that all this can be changed in each of the four ways: in the way of the Fakir by conquering physical suffering, in the way of the Monk by creating religious emotion, in the way of the Yogi by acquiring knowledge and working on consciousness. Ways are the same, but people are different; a man who can go by one way cannot go by another. There are four definite categories of people in our times according to which the ways are divided. I do not mean that it has always been so, but it is definitely so now. This division is connected not so much with people being No. 1, 2 or 3 as with there being one-centre people, two-centre people, three-centre people, four-centre people. This means people in whom one centre is fully developed while the others are under-developed, or two centres developed and the others not developed, or three centres developed and the fourth under-developed, or four centres developed more or less equally. This makes the division into four ways.

Q. Is this system the Fourth Way?

A. This is a wrong formulation. You can ask yourself: 'Does this system belong to the way of the Fakir, the way of the Monk, or the way of the Yogi? No, but it may belong to the Fourth Way.' You cannot say this system is the Fourth Way; the Fourth Way is very big, and this system is very small by comparison.

Q. Is it only in relation to schools that magnetic centre operates?

A. In the religious way a different magnetic centre is necessary. A magnetic centre that brings one to a Yogi school or a monastery is different from the magnetic centre that brings one even to a group that may possibly lead to a Fourth Way school. With that kind of magnetic centre one would not be able to work here: people would not have enough initiative. In the religious way they must obey. In this way people must have broader minds, they must understand. In Yogi schools and the religious way one can go on for a long time without understanding, just doing what one is told. Here, results are proportionate to understanding.

Q. The magnetic centre of different people may be attracted by different ideas? Is the starting-point connected with that?

A. Yes, it may be very different, but in relation to this system there must be a certain similarity of magnetic centres, so that people can work together; because in a certain period, class and education, people have more or less the same material.

Q. Does the Fourth Way embrace the three other ways?

A. No, this is a wrong description, because the Fourth Way does not have many of the things which enter into the first three ways, and it has many other things that do not enter into the three ways. The idea of the Fourth Way is that it discards from the three ways all that is unnecessary in them, because besides the necessary things the three ways have other things which have remained there purely through tradition, imitation and so on.

In the Fourth Way all the sides that can develop, develop at the same time, and this makes it different from other ways where you first develop one side and then go back and develop another, then again go back and develop a third side. In the Fourth Way all the four centres must be more or less alive, on the surface, open to receive impressions, otherwise long preliminary work to open them is necessary before one can begin.

Q. Is not the Fourth Way actually very much the most difficult, owing to the continual choice entailed under conditions of maximum outside distractions?

A. It depends what you call most difficult. The other three ways need a very big decision right at the beginning, when you really know nothing. You have to renounce everything absolutely. If you can do that, and if you have other qualities that are needed, you can go by the way of the Monk, or the way of the Yogi, if you can find a Monk or a Yogi school. But if you do not know such schools and if you find that you cannot give up even small things, then certainly this is the only way possible for you. It is not a question of more or less difficult; it is a question of which is most possible. Then, if you think, you will find that there is only one way

that is possible.

Q. Is there anything in the schools of the Fourth Way equal to prayer state, and if so, does it come with self-remembering?

A. Yes, in all the ways one has to pass through the same experiences, only in a different order. Certainly self-remembering, non-identifying and several other practices will give exactly the same personal sensations as high emotions of a religious or an intellectual order. You remember that man was compared to a house with four rooms. What does development mean? It means working in the four rooms, only the order of rooms in which a man works is different in different ways. In the Fourth Way work is done in all the four rooms at once.

Q. Is this organization a school?

A. This is an interesting question: can we call ourselves a school? To a certain extent we may, because we acquire a certain knowledge and at the same time we learn how to change our being. But I must say in relation to this that in the beginning of our work, in St. Petersburg in 1916, we were made to understand that a school, in the full sense of the term, must consist of two degrees, that is, it must have two levels in it: one level, where men 1, 2 and 3 learn to become No. 4 and the other level where men No. 4 learn to become No. 5. If a school has two levels, it has more possibilities, because a double organization of this kind can give a larger variety of experience and make the work more quick and more sure. So, although in a certain sense we can call ourselves a school, it is better to use this term for a bigger organization.

Q. Did I understand from what you said that this is not exactly a school?

A. For some people it may be a school, for others not. It is always like that. It cannot be definite and cannot be the same for everybody.

Q. If it is not yet ready to be called a school, what can make it so?

A. Only work of its members on their own being, understanding of the principles of school work and discipline of a certain very definite kind. If we want to create a school, because we have come to the conclusion that we cannot change by ourselves without it, we must take part in the building of the school. This is the method of the Fourth Way. In the religious way schools already exist, but here, if we want a school, we must take part in the building of it. But first you must learn. When you know enough, you will know what to do.

Q. You said that one can learn how to escape only from those who have escaped before?

A. Quite right – in the allegory of prison. And this means a school can only start from another school. This system can have value only if it comes from higher mind. If we have reason to believe that it only comes from an ordinary mind, like ours, it can have no value and we cannot expect anything from it. Then better sit down and write your own system.

Q. Would it be possible for everyone in a school to progress from No. 4 to No. 5, or only for a few?

A. There is no limitation in principle. But you must understand that there is an enormous difference between man No. 4 and man No. 5. Man No. 4 is a man who has acquired a permanent centre of gravity, but in everything else he is an ordinary man. Man No. 5 is very different. He already has unity, a permanent 'I', the third state of consciousness. This means that he is awake, he can always remember himself when he needs it and the higher emotional centre works in him which gives him many new powers.

Q. Is it worse not to be able to go on with the system than not to have started?

A. If you have started, nobody can stop you, except yourself.

Q. How can one reconcile this with what you said about their being no guarantee?

A. It depends on your work. How can I guarantee your work? What we can get depends on our own efforts, and one must work at one's own risk. But after some time one begins to see: 'I got this that I did not have before' and 'I got that that I did not have before'. So little by little one can be more sure.

Q. What does a school study?

A. It studies possibilities of the development of inner qualities in man. It begins with the idea that not all the qualities can develop equally. In order that certain qualities should develop, other qualities have to be restrained and some others have to go. Suppose you have a hundred qualities. Out of these, suppose thirty can develop and seventy cannot. Then you have to restrain those seventy in order that the thirty may develop. And in schools they have a certain knowledge about which qualities can and which cannot develop, which conditions are good, how to restrain certain qualities, how to develop other qualities. Different schools teach in different ways. For instance, this kind of school says simply: develop only consciousness and all the rest will be added unto you, and for that one must struggle with negative emotions, lying, identification, considering, imagination and so on.

Q. You said we must verify everything, but if we can only know what we ourselves have experienced, does it not limit us to a very small world?

A. We know not only what we experience ourselves, we know what other people have experienced. The whole idea of school is study on the basis of the experience of other people, not people such as we are, but people of higher mind, otherwise there can be no school. If a school is limited only to what we know ourselves, then it is not a school.

Q. Isn't it the belief that there exists something beyond what we know that makes us seek for it?

A. There are many things beyond, only we must understand that our possibility of knowing, *actually* knowing, is very limited in present conditions. We can formulate problems, we can make theories, but we cannot find answers for them, or we can find merely theoretical answers so that one answer is as good as another. But we can hope and expect that if we change our state of consciousness and perfect our inner machinery we shall perhaps know more.

Q. Does school stand for self-initiation?

A. What does self-initiation mean? It is all words. What would it mean to be initiated into the Chinese language? It would mean to learn it, to be taught. You cannot be initiated into Chinese by laying hands on you. Initiation is work. Two people can be in the same school, and for one it will be a school of one level and for another a school of another level. And for a third it may not be a school at all. It depends how deep one is in it. The highest school can be on very low level, and one and the same school can be on different levels, depending on the people in it. It requires work and remembering of aim.

Q. If schools are so important, why do they not have more influence in the world?

A. Schools can only act through people who are interested in them. They can do nothing if they are surrounded by people who are indifferent. The possibility of schools influencing life is conditioned by the general attitude to schools. In order to have influence, schools must have people who are interested and who would obey. But this must come from below, it cannot be produced by schools. Schools can throw influences into the world, but if people are not interested in them, they can do nothing. They cannot use violence.

Q. Can a school lose by giving away its knowledge?

A. A school can lose in many different ways. We shall come to this question later on. It depends whom it gives to. If it gives just in general and does not receive anything, certainly it will lose. If one has money and begins to give it to everybody, whether they deserve it or not, certainly one will lose one's money.

Q. You said that if we want a school we must take part in building it. How can we do that?

A. You must remember that the level of a school depends on the level of being of the people who constitute it. If there are not enough people with magnetic centre, there can be no school. But it is not simply coming to lectures and accepting what one hears that shows the presence of a magnetic centre.

Q. Would the spreading of school ideas and school language among other people be of any

help from the point of view of the school?

A. Ideas cannot be spread in the right form – it is important to understand that. It would be very good if it could be done, but it cannot. Words would remain, but the ideas themselves would be different. If it were enough to spread them, why are schools necessary? The language will spread itself, maybe even in our lifetime, but the ideas will enter into the general currency in a wrong form. For instance, there would be no distinction between ‘doing’ and ‘happening’.

Q. We talk of schools and different levels. Is it not rather confusing? What do higher levels mean?

A. Why do you find the idea of higher levels confusing? For instance, we can take this idea of levels quite simply in relation to ourselves: using all our mental capacities we can think only up to a certain level, but if we could use higher centres, for instance higher emotional centre which already needs more or less complete self-remembering, then certainly on the same subject we could think quite differently and find many more connections in things which we do not notice now. That shows different levels of thinking, and sometimes we actually have glimpses of a higher level of thinking, so we may have some material for observation, because even now we can think differently on the same subject.

And as regards different levels of people, we meet with results of work of people obviously belonging to higher planes; we cannot say that our experience of ordinary life is limited to results of work of people like ourselves. Take the New Testament, and there are also works of art, esoteric writings, Christian literature and so on which obviously cannot belong to ordinary people. The existence of people of higher development is not imagination, not a hypothesis, but an actual fact. So I do not understand in what way it is confusing; I do not see how one can think without recognizing this fact. It is a definite fact that people live not only on the level on which we are but can exist on different levels.

From this point of view humanity can be regarded as divided into four concentric circles. The three inner circles are called Esoteric, Mesoteric and Exoteric. The fourth is the outer circle where men 1, 2 and 3 live. Schools act as gates through which man No. 4, who is between the outer and the Exoteric circle, can pass. Man No. 5 belongs to the Exoteric circle, man No. 6 to the Mesoteric and man No. 7 to the Esoteric or the innermost circle. The outer circle is also called the circle of the confusion of tongues, for in this circle people cannot understand one another. Understanding is possible only in the inner circles.

All this means there are degrees. A man who lives in the outer circle is under the law of accident, or, if he has a strongly expressed essence, his life is more governed by the laws of his type or the laws of fate. But when a man begins to work towards consciousness, he already has direction. This means a change, perhaps not perceptible, but nevertheless cosmically a change. Only individual effort can help man to pass from the outer circle into the Exoteric circle. What refers to a man in the outer circle does not refer to a man who begins to work. He is under different laws, or rather, different laws begin to touch a man who begins to work. Each circle is under different laws.

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