

CHAPTER XII

Necessity to distinguish more important from less important ideas of the system – Limitations of being – Possibilities of changing being – Householder, tramp and lunatic – Hasnamuss – Sleep and the possibility of awaking – Realisations and words – How to increase emotional attitude – Sense of proportion – Self-remembering – To know and to see oneself – Being serious – Struggle with habits – Understanding mechanicalness – Efforts – Self-study – Self-observation – Shocks – How to be more emotional? – Putting more pressure into the work – Training the emotional centre – Positive emotions – Pleasant and unpleasant emotions – Increasing valuation – How new things come – Slowness of understanding – Raising one's standard.

NOW IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO THINK about everything you have heard from the point of view of what is more important, that is to say, to look for the centre of gravity in all the different ideas you have studied and to try to find the chief points, because, as in everything else, there are more important and less important points. There are auxiliary things which help you to understand the chief points, and there are chief points which determine the whole. It is now time to distinguish between them.

Right questions, right problems are those that refer to *being* and change of being, how to find the weak sides of our being and how to fight against them. We must understand that, before acquiring new knowledge, we must realize our limitations and the fact that our limitations are really limitations of our being. Our knowledge remains on the same level. It grows in a certain direction, but this growth is very limited. We must see what a restricted field we live in, always deceiving ourselves, always imagining things to be different from what they are. We think it is very easy to change something, but it is only when we sincerely try that we realize how difficult, how almost impossible it is. The idea of change of being is the most important idea of all. Theories, systems, diagrams are only a help; they help concentration and right thinking, but there can be only one real aim, and that is to change our being, for if we want to change something in our own understanding of the world, we must change something in ourselves.

What is interesting in this connection, and what I would like to speak about, is the division of men from the point of view of the possibility of changing being. There is such a division.

It is particularly connected with the idea of the Path or Way. You remember it was said that from the moment one becomes connected with influence C a staircase begins and only when a man gets to the top of it is the Path or Way reached? A question was asked about who is able to come up to this staircase, climb it and reach the Way. Mr Gurdjieff answered by using a Russian word which can be translated as 'Householder'. In Indian and Buddhist literature this is a very well-defined type of man and type of life which can bring one to change of being. 'Snataka' or 'Householder' simply means a man who leads an ordinary life. Such a man can have doubts about the value of ordinary things; he can have dreams about possibilities of development; he can come to a school, either after a long life or at the beginning of life, and he can work in a school. Only from among such men come people who are able to climb the staircase and reach the Path.

Other people he divided into two categories: first, 'tramps', and second, 'lunatics'. Tramps do not necessarily mean poor people; they may be rich and may still be 'tramps' in their attitude to life. And a 'lunatic' does not mean a man deprived of ordinary mind; he may be a statesman or a professor.

These two categories are no good for a school and will not be interested in it; tramps because they are not really interested in anything; lunatics because they have false values. So if they attempt to climb up the staircase they only fall down and break their necks.

First it is necessary to understand these three categories from the point of view of the possibility of changing being, possibility of school-work. This division means only one thing – that people are not in exactly the same position in relation to possibilities of work. There are people for whom the possibility of changing their being exists; there are many people for whom it is practically impossible, because they brought their being to such a state that there is no starting-point in them; and there are people belonging to yet a fourth category who, by different means, have already destroyed all possibility of changing their being. This division is not parallel to any other division. Belonging to one of the first three categories is not permanent and can be changed, but one can come to the work only from the first category, not from the second or the third; the fourth category excludes all possibilities. So, though people may be born with the same rights, so to speak, they lose their rights very easily.

When you understand these categories and find them in your own experience, among your acquaintances, in life, in literature, you will understand this fourth category of people. In ordinary conditions, in ordinary times, they are just criminals or actual lunatics – nothing more. But in certain periods of history such people very often play a leading part; they may acquire power and become very important people. But we must leave them for the moment and concentrate on the first three categories.

Q. Is this possibility of growth of being connected with willingness to obey certain laws and principles?

A. Not necessarily. There are different ways. On the monk's way, for instance, you have to begin with obeying. There are other ways that do not begin with obeying but with studying and understanding General laws you cannot disobey, because they make you obey. You can escape from some of them only through growth of being, not in any other way

Q. Does it follow, then, that people who have connection with a school, however slight, belong to those who can change their being?

A. Certainly, if they are interested in school and are sincere in their attitude towards school, it shows that they belong to those who can. But you see, in each of us there are features of tramp and lunatic. It does not mean that if we are connected with a school we are already free from these features. They play a certain part in us, and in studying being we must detect them; we must know in which way they prevent our work, and we must struggle with them. This is impossible without a school. As I said before, tramps can be not only rich, they can be very well established in life and still be tramps. Lunatics can be very learned people and occupy a big position in life and still be lunatics.

Q. Is one of the features of a lunatic that he wants certain things out of proportion to other things, in such a way that it will be bad for him as a whole?

A. 'Lunatic' means a man who always runs after false values, who has no right discrimination. He is always formatory. Formatory thinking is always defective, and lunatics are particularly devoted to formatory thinking: that is their chief affection in one way or another. There are many different ways to be formatory.

Q. Is the tramp side in oneself a sort of irresponsibility that is prepared to throw everything overboard?

A. Quite right. Sometimes it can take very poetical forms: 'There are no values in the World' – 'Nothing is worth anything' – 'Everything is relative' – those are favourite phrases. But actually the tramp is not so dangerous. The lunatic is more dangerous, since it means false values and formatory thinking.

Q. What is it that determines which category a man belongs to?

A. A certain attitude to life, to people, and certain possibilities that one has. It is the same for all the three categories. The fourth category is separate.

About this fourth category, I will give you just a few definitions. In the system this category has a special name, consisting of two Turkish words. It is 'Hasnamuss'. One of the first things

about a 'Hasnamuss' is that he never hesitates to sacrifice people or to create an enormous amount of suffering, just for his own personal ambitions. How a 'Hasnamuss' is created is another question. It begins with formatory thinking, with being a tramp and a lunatic at the same time. Another definition of a 'Hasnamuss' is that he is crystallized in the wrong hydrogens. This category cannot interest you practically, because you have nothing to do with such people; but you meet with the results of their existence.

As I said, for us it is important to understand the second and third categories, because we can find in ourselves features of them both, especially the third. In order to struggle against the second, that is the tramp, school discipline and a general inner discipline are needed, because there is no discipline in a tramp. In a lunatic there may be a great deal of discipline, only of the wrong kind – all formatory. So struggle with formatory thinking is struggle against lunacy in ourselves, and the creation of discipline and self-discipline is struggle against the tramp in us.

As to the characteristics of a man in the first category, that is the householder – to begin with he is a practical man; he is not formatory; he must have a certain amount of discipline, otherwise he would not be what he is. So practical thinking and self-discipline are characteristics of the first category. Such a man has enough of these for ordinary life but not enough for work, so in the work these two characteristics must increase and grow. A householder is a normal man, and a normal man, given favourable conditions, has the possibility of development.

Q. Is there the possibility of the householder in everybody?

A. Not in everybody. I already said that there are some people who have lost the capacity for practical thinking or the capacity for development. In such a case they are fully lunatics or tramps according to what they have lost.

Q. You mean from birth?

A. That we do not know. We cannot speak about that: we can only speak about results. We know that in the work one must have the capacity for practical thinking and practical attitude, and one must have sufficient self-discipline to accept school discipline.

Q. What do you mean by practical thinking?

A. Just what is called practical thinking in ordinary language, namely, the capacity to calculate things in different circumstances. This same capacity can be applied to ideas of the work, school principles, rules, everything.

Q. It seems that people in the category of lunatics or tramps are further from any appreciation of truth than the householder?

A. There is no guarantee of that. As facts go, they can be exactly on the same level in relation to that, but their potentiality is different. Like many other things, people do not differ as manifestations go; they do not differ one from another among mechanical people. But possibilities are different. One can become different, another cannot; one can change only if a miracle happens, another can change by his own efforts and with certain help.

Q. You say we all have parts of tramp, lunatic and householder?

A. Try not to think about it in these terms. Find your own words – what is meant by 'householder', what is meant by 'tramp', what is meant by 'lunatic'. These words are not a description, they are only a hint at certain possibilities.

Q. If one does not like self-discipline, is this a description?

A. Not a description; only one feature. First of all the tramp has no values; everything is the same; good and bad do not exist for him; and because of that, or in connection with that, he has no discipline. The lunatic values what has no value and does not value what has value. These are the chief characteristics, not a description. The householder has at least certain values from which he can start and a certain practical attitude towards things. He knows that if he wants to eat he must work.

Q. About the fourth category of man, who has destroyed all possibility of development, does that situation arise in him because of some form of extraordinary selfishness?

A. Yes, in most cases. It is useful to know about this category only because sometimes these people play a great part in life. But they are already there: we can neither help them nor destroy them.

We must think about our own selves, our attitude, and chiefly about our understanding. Because if we understand, it is already better; we accept such people more easily and know their ways.

Q. Are the distinctions between men 1, 2, 3 and 4 definite, or, like tramps, lunatics, householders, are we a bit of each?

A. You know, you absolutely spoil ideas for yourself when you take them like this and mix them up. These ideas are very important. First you must take one, quite separately, and try to understand it. Then take another and try to understand that one. The division of men Nos. 1, 2, 3 and so on is one thing and it was not given parallel to anything else. You must study it as it is – what is meant by man No. 1, by man No. 2, by man No. 3, what are the various combinations of these, how they are mixed and so on.

Then take this second idea. In order to understand what is meant by householder, tramp, lunatic and the further degradations, so to speak, each must be taken separately. You cannot take them all together and talk about them in one breath. This division was mentioned in connection with the possibility of development. You must realize the enormous number of people who, by the state of their being, are incapable of appreciating any real ideas.

Q. Could a tramp ever be outwardly successful?

A. This word is used to describe people who in the ordinary way are often supposed to be very near the possibility of development, although actually they are very far from it – further than quite ordinary people. People can know many beautiful words, speak very easily and yet be very far from the possibility of development.

Q. What is the significance of the idea represented by these three categories?

A. The important thing is that in each of us, even if we find we have some practical attitudes and certain values, an important part of us also has no values or has false values, like the tramp and the lunatic

Q. What can help us to get more discrimination?

A. Divide in yourself the mechanical from the conscious, see how little there is of the conscious, how seldom it works, and how strong is the mechanical – mechanical attitudes, mechanical intentions, mechanical thoughts, mechanical desires.

Q. What is the best way to work on self-knowledge?

A. You remember I said in the beginning that there are two lines by which our development can and must proceed. The first is the line of knowledge. This is comprehensible, we must increase our knowledge, for we do not know enough either about ourselves or about the universe. The second is the line of being, for our being is not what it should be, not only in the sense that we are half-developed beings so that our level can be raised, but also in the sense that certain things in us are underdeveloped even for our present state. I said that the chief features of our being are, for instance, that we are not one, that we are many, that we are not conscious. This is inevitable, but the fact that we do not realize it can be changed: we *can* know it. For example, we can know that at every moment not a single action, not a single thought comes from the whole – but only from a small part of us. We can become aware of it. Change of being in most cases begins with our becoming aware of something we were not aware of before. But being itself can grow and develop; our level of being can change, and parallel with that grows our knowledge. Real work is work on being, but knowledge helps. At the same time work on knowledge is also important, and then being helps, because in the state we are in we cannot acquire even much knowledge – it will be broken up and divided between

the different 'I's. Sometimes people work for several years, acquire information, but do not work on their being. Then they leave, but they cannot forget the knowledge they acquired and it works in them, but their being does not correspond to it, and so their knowledge becomes distorted.

As regards knowledge, you must also understand that there are three men in everyone – man No. 1, man No. 2 and man No. 3. One of them may predominate, but everyone has all three. So even in ourselves we have three categories of knowledge. Part of our knowledge is knowledge of man No. 1, part is knowledge of man No. 2 and part – knowledge of man No. 3. When you divide what each of them knows, you will see how a man with a strong pre-dominance can be swayed by it.

Some schools start in a wrong way from the beginning and develop imaginary qualities, such as visions and things like that, for work on being needs constant supervision and knowledge, otherwise many things can go wrong: one can take imagination for the real thing, and if one does not work on being in the right way, one's work can take a wrong turn. This is very important to understand: there must always be these two lines, one helping the other.

Q. You said that one of the features of our being is that we are never one. Surely in the case of identification we are one – we are not many; but perhaps in a wrong way?

A. Yes, but it is only one of the many groups of 'I's; it is not *the whole*. And identification practically excludes all other 'I's. Even at ordinary moments, if you are relatively not identified, one 'I' can be doing something and other 'I's can watch and look in the same direction, at least a certain number of them. But in a state of identification they are completely shut out: one small 'I' occupies the whole field. This is a characteristic of our being, that one small 'I' calls itself 'I', meaning the whole thing. That is why I say that we always lie to ourselves and to everybody else when we say 'I', because this is not 'I' but only a small thing pretending to be the whole.

Q. What is it in us that makes efforts?

A. Again one of the 'I's or a small group of them. Our aim is to be able to make right efforts of self-study and self-development with a bigger group of 'I's, so that this small group of 'I's that begins self-study may grow and after some time become sufficiently big and strong to control the whole thing and keep the direction. But in the beginning it has to be educated in all that we call school-work by a certain kind of study. If this small group of 'I's with which you begin does not grow, you will not have enough strength to go on. Many people begin this work and then leave it. Nothing can be done about it, and one cannot tell beforehand. After some time you will see for yourself whether you have enough energy and interest; because work needs energy and effort. You can get neither knowledge nor being by being passive. You have to be active in relation to the work.

The chief thing to remember and think about in connection with change of being is sleep and the possibility of awaking. You must find in yourself certain ideas, certain thoughts which will awake you.

Q. Are there certain ideas that will always awake one, because I find some ideas help a lot one day and not another?

A. Yes, certainly, but you must find things that help more often, certain *realizations*. There is a great difference between realization and words. Once you have realized something, you know that it is true. Then you must not forget it. The chief question must be how to awake. Realize that you are asleep, that everybody is asleep. Then realize that the only way out is to awake. It is necessary to concentrate on one fact – sleep and the possibility of awaking. If you think about it and feel it, then the chance appears. Until you come to this realization, there is no chance, really. You can talk about this system, about worlds, hydrogens, cosmoses and everything else in the same way as you talk about other things, and nothing will happen.

Q. If one has the realization that one is asleep. ...

A. 'If' is already a dream. All dreams begin with 'if'. Try to think without it. Yes, this realization is the only thing. It is necessary to find ways to awake, and before that you must realize what sleep is.

Q. How is one to increase one's emotional attitude to the ideas of the system?

A. Compare sleep and awaking. All ideas of the work begin with the idea of sleep and the possibility of awaking. All other ideas, life ideas may be clever, elaborate, but they are ideas of sleeping people. We are so accustomed to these imaginary ideas that, after some time, we take the ideas of the system on the same level as these other ideas that lead nowhere. It is useful to think that every day when you meet here may be the last day. We do not know what to-morrow may bring, but we usually forget this. If you realize it, your emotional attitude will increase by itself and you will be able to think about what is really important.

Try to think about the relative importance of things. It is very necessary to understand how to approach this problem. How can you think about the importance of something if you have no material for comparison? You must have different things to compare. Try to compare the ideas and principles of the work with things in life.

Q. It seems that the two are entirely different.

A. It will not help you if you say they are different. We want to find for ourselves and not for academic purposes what is more important and what is less important, so it is not the way to begin. You will never get the right proportion, the right material for comparison if you begin in this way. Think and you will see.

Q. My difficulty is that I accept intellectually that something is important and profitable and something else is unimportant and unprofitable, but I have no feeling about it.

A. Realization will bring emotional feeling. It must be realized more often, must be connected with more things. Just try to pass, more or less, the ideas you have heard through your head. Find which of them attract you more. Some remain just words for you, about others you have practical observations or experiences. That will help.

Q. It was said that we have to cut out everything unnecessary in order to progress. I find it very difficult.

A. I think this is the aim in everything. If you are doing something for a certain definite purpose, then certainly the fewer unnecessary things you do the nearer you come to your aim. For instance, if you are hurrying to catch a train and at the same time want to linger over your newspaper, you will miss your train and will not read the newspaper. It is better to take the paper with you and read it in the train. But to cut out everything is impossible, and impossible things are not required. However, the principle remains that we have so many unnecessary things we consider obligatory that we can reduce them a little.

Q. Is it usual that one becomes less interested in life as one becomes more conscious?

A. It depends on what one understands by life, because this expression can have many different interpretations. One may be interested in one side of life which is absolutely incompatible with other interests, or one may be interested in a side of life that can become connected with these other interests.

Q. Desire seems to be essential to becoming conscious, yet cannot desire become an obstacle to consciousness?

A. Desire is a complicated thing – it is really a combination of a whole series of thoughts, feelings, even fears. Desire to be conscious comes when you are afraid of mechanicalness. First one must realize that one is a machine, and then be afraid of it. Then desire will appear.

Q. Lately I have had a rather depressing feeling that in spite of the work I still seem frightfully mechanical.

A. We are certainly mechanical and we cannot do anything about it at present, until we know ourselves better, not only in general, but personally, individually, for there are many general things common to everybody, and there are many individual features. First we study the

general things, then the individual; and when we know ourselves, we shall understand where to begin. Now we are just trying to do elementary things, more for self-study than for actual results.

Q. How can one cure periods of listlessness, when system ideas have no strength?

A. Everything goes in waves – up and down. It is necessary to acquire enough memory and enough elevation, so to speak, in order that at moments of depression one will not lose the thread, will not forget what has been.

Q. But what to put in the place of the feeling of depression which comes when illusions disappear?

A. Depression may be due to other illusions that take the place of the vanished ones. The first illusions were full of hope and the other illusions may be full of despair, that is all.

Q. How can we strengthen and fix moments when emotion is felt and we want to work, and use this at moments when we do not want to work?

A. By trying to connect these moments. When you are in this state of wanting to work, remember other moments when you were in the same state and make a mental link between them.

Q. But will it bring with it incentive to work?

A. In this system incentive must come from the realization of your present situation and of the possibility of change. Or it may be even more simple. Incentive to work may be brought by the realization that it is possible to know more than you know now. The second refers to knowledge and the first to being. Actually you must have both, and all this must be verified. Very soon after you begin to work, you realize that you begin to acquire certain knowledge that opens new possibilities of understanding. Nobody can escape this if he really tries to work. And after some time one will notice changes in oneself, which one cannot describe, but which produce quite different attitudes. This is inevitable, so it gives one a definite valuation and a definite understanding that one is getting something and moving somewhere, instead of standing still.

Q. How can one strengthen decisions?

A. It depends on the decision. The first thing is to know what is more and what is less important. If you learn to distinguish this, decision will not be difficult. You must learn to discriminate between mechanicalness and consciousness on our level. Things that are connected with work can be conscious. Things connected with convenience, gain, pleasure, profit are mechanical. Then there is another side. If the result of the decision is really important and is connected with your work, you have a right to ask for advice. In such a case you must particularly try not to decide alone.

Q. I feel that my attitude to the work needs complete revision. The system is only of importance to one 'I' – the others do not want to learn or change. Is there some way in which I can be helped to want to work?

A. But who will do this if only one 'I' is interested and the others are not? You speak as though you were something different from these 'I's. One 'I' may decide, but another will come along and will not know about it. This is the situation and you must try to do all you can. Do not dream of things you cannot do or try to do more than you can. Nobody can help you to want to work, you must want yourself, but if you do not do what you can, you will lose and work less and less. If you try to remember yourself or to stop thoughts three or four times a day, this will very soon give you energy, only it must be regular. How can we increase our power to work? Only by working, there is no other way. If you learn to make small efforts you will have small results, and if you make bigger efforts you will get bigger results.

Q. How can one be more sure that there is a concrete advantage in becoming more conscious and less mechanical?

A. You must decide for yourself; find reasons for it. First try to understand what it would mean to be more conscious and less mechanical; then decide. Only then will it have real weight. If I answer, it will be my opinion. There are things that one must decide for oneself, only then can they have real meaning and show real understanding.

We do not know what it means to become conscious. But we do not know our present state either, because we live in illusions. If we were free from illusions, a strong impulse to get out of this state and to change would become possible. One cannot describe fully what this change means, and it is better not to try, for imagination is always ready to work in us and deceive us. Better study the present state. If you do, you lose nothing; for we have nothing to lose.

Q. I feel sometimes that I have no sense of proportion. How can I try to remedy that?

A. But this is the whole thing! This is the aim of all work. All that we do has as aim to have a real sense of proportion. But you cannot have it before you work, so it is necessary to work and then, as a result of work, you will have a better sense of proportion.

Q. I think the greatest difficulty is to find the bridge between our ordinary life and serious work in the system. What is the bridge?

A. There is no need to look for a bridge, because this system gives the possibility to begin work at once, just as you are. At the same time, when you begin to think about possible results of work and about what happens without any work, you will see that they are quite different. In one case everything happens and in another case you have to be conscious in order to act according to what you know. There is no bridge between these; what bridge can there be between madness and sanity?

Q. Does change of being free one from external events?

A. That you must find out by experience. The more you become united in yourself and the more you are conscious, the less you will depend on circumstances. You will understand them better, find your way better, and thus you will become more free. As to what happens later, it must be experienced in further stages. It is useless to speak about it theoretically. You can judge now, by everything I say, that I am trying to bring you to practical things.

Q. Self-remembering is much more difficult in some life circumstances. Should one avoid them?

A. It is a mistake to think that life circumstances, that is, external circumstances, can change or affect anything. This is an illusion. As to whether to avoid them or not – try to avoid them, or try to take them as a role you have to play. However, if you manage to avoid them you will find that nothing has changed; there may be exceptions, but the general balance usually remains the same.

Q. If we are all weakness and no strength, from what source do we draw such strength as is needed even to begin work on ourselves?

A. We have certain strength. If we were only weakness, we could do nothing; if we had no strength at all we would not be interested in the work. If we realize our situation, we already have certain strength, and new knowledge increases this strength. So we have quite enough to start with. Later, strength comes from new knowledge, new efforts.

Q. I find it very difficult to work in the right way, because I do not see what kind of effort is right at one time and not at another.

A. Trying to remember yourself is always right, if you can make yourself try. Whatever you are doing, just try to realize that you are doing that, or that you are not doing something you have to do. If you try this persistently, it will give results. Effort to remember yourself is the chief thing, because without it nothing else has any value; it must be the basis of everything. Only in this way can you pass from the mechanical to a more conscious state.

Q. I still cannot see in what way self-remembering is distinct from thinking of oneself?

A. Thinking of yourself is another thing. If you want to remember yourself, the best thing is not to think about yourself. As long as you think about yourself, you will not remember yourself. It is difficult to explain the difference in words. It is as though you think about yourself on one basis and you try to remember yourself on another basis. You realize that you do not remember yourself, that you are not conscious, and by making yourself remember this absence of consciousness you begin to remember yourself. I cannot explain it any better. You do not get the right method at once, but if you try for some time you will find some particular line of thought that will help you. Then you will discover that if you think about some particular things in a certain way it will make you remember yourself. And this is the first step to consciousness.

Q. I do not know whether I remember myself or not at certain moments.

A. It is sufficient to know that you do not. Catch a moment when you are particularly far from remembering yourself – at this moment you will remember yourself.

Q. If I say to myself ‘I will remember myself. . . .’?

A. Nothing comes; you cannot start that way. Either think of something that will bring it, or realize that you do not remember yourself.

Q. I see now, at this moment, that I do not remember myself, but it goes no further.

A. Go deeper. Nothing more is necessary. Realize more and more, deeper and deeper, that neither you nor other people remember, that nobody remembers himself. This will bring you to it better than anything else. Our difficulty in self-remembering is chiefly dependent on lack of realization that we do not remember ourselves. Later many other things may enter into it, but if you try to have them all at once you will have nothing. Try to observe how your time passes. Say you are in the theatre, or you are here, or you go to see friends, then, when you come home, ask yourself were you aware of yourself, and you will find that you were not. Or if you are in a bus, ask yourself, when you get off, what happened on the way. You will see that you never remember yourself naturally, you have to *make* yourself do it.

Q. Then how do accidental glimpses of self-remembering come about?

A. It may be an intense work of centres, particularly when one function looks at another. When one centre is observing another centre, impressions may be strong enough or conflicting enough, or helping enough, to bring about self-remembering. Many things of that kind you can create intentionally, for you cannot rely on being made self-conscious by accident.

Q. I feel it is not enough to be assured that we will know the state of self-remembering by its special taste, and I want to know how we may recognize it intellectually, without risk of interference by emotion or subjective thought.

A. Emotion does not mean interference. Intellectual function can bring you only to a certain stage; further you have to travel on emotion. About self-consciousness, which is a higher state of consciousness, no one can say that it is a definitely possible or easy experience, for it means change of being; so it is difficult to tell a mechanical man how he will feel and look at things when he becomes more conscious. He is asleep. How can one say what he will feel or do when he awakes?

We cannot make the first step towards higher states because there are many things we do not want to give up. Each of us knows perfectly well what he has to give up, but no one wants to do it. But in relation to self-remembering it is much more simple; if one really tries all possible means one will notice a difference between one’s state and the state of a man who does not try to remember himself.

Q. When I try to self-remember, sometimes my idea of time changes. Is it an illusion?

A. It is quite possible, but in relation to self-remembering we must not think about additional results, side results. We must only think about the definite fact that we do not remember ourselves, which means that we are asleep, and that we want to remember ourselves, which

means to be awake. Maybe the subjective feeling of time and many other things will change, but this is not important. What is important is the fact that we are asleep; and the effort to awake is important.

Q. How can I build up a real direction, a stronger aim?

A. Again the same thing – by building yourself; you can be stronger than yourself.

Q. But we are the sum-total of different 'I's. How can one know which 'I' to trust?

A. One cannot know – that is our state. We have to deal with what we are until we change, but we work with the idea of possible change, and the more we realize the hopeless state we are in, the more energy we shall have for making efforts to change.

Q. While I find it is only too easy to understand how mechanical I am in most ways, I find it difficult to reconcile my inconsistency with this idea. Is this the result of an imperfect understanding of the simile?

A. No. You see, it is easy to understand mechanicalness with the mind. But to remember it always, to see it in facts, in things, to see how everything happens is always very difficult. It takes time.

Q. Why is it that some recurrent mistakes you may see, but cannot stop until somebody points them out to you?

A. Even that will not help. You can go on doing it every day, until you find the cause. Maybe it depends on some other thing, and this thing on yet another thing and so on. For everything you want to change you must find the beginning. But we do not speak about change now, we only speak about study. Change goes further. Naturally, if you find something very obvious, you must try to change it, but this is mostly for self-observation, because if something always happens in a mechanical way you cannot even observe it.

Q. The most fundamental idea of the system is changing oneself, isn't it?

A. It is first necessary to know what to change. The most fundamental thing is to know oneself, although, as you have heard from the very beginning, if certain things do not change you cannot know yourself, for in our ordinary state we have a very strong antagonism to any change or any kind of work. People who only want to know and do not agree with change never learn to know themselves, just as people who only want to study the system intellectually get nothing and in most cases leave very soon. But to know oneself is a long process. First we must study.

Q. Must we not expect any results from our work?

A. What is the use of working without results? But you cannot expect them too quickly, you cannot expect immediate results. You put a twig into the earth and you cannot expect a big tree next year. Growth is a process.

Q. Some time ago you said that before one can know oneself one must see oneself. Does seeing oneself mean a combination of self-observation and self-remembering?

A. No, just having a right picture of oneself. Before you get that, you cannot begin any serious work, you can only study, and even that will be fractional.

Q. It is very difficult to make sure that one is telling the truth to oneself.

A. Yes, that is why I said to see oneself first, not to know. We have many pictures of ourselves, we must see them, one after another, and then compare them. But we cannot say at the first glance which is right. It can only be verified by repeated experience. This is what, in the first group in St Petersburg, was called taking mental snapshots of oneself in preparation for seeing oneself.

Q. Cannot repeated experience also be wrong?

A. Yes, we can deceive ourselves even in that. But when the emotional element – conscience – enters, that will be verification.

Q. How does one take those mental snapshots?

A. Without a camera. See how you look, how people see you in one or another set of circumstances. You have to do it yourself, although sometimes it may be useful to ask other people about their impression of you, because everybody has a wrong picture of himself. Everybody stands before a mirror and, instead of himself, sees somebody else. If you do that you will get an idea of your roles. Roles are often divided by buffers, so we cannot look from one role at another.

Q. Does to see yourself mean you both see your faults and also what to do about them?

A. Sometimes it may be like that. But you are again trying to have a definition and an explanation, and I speak about actual practice, not about defining or translating it into words. I mean *actually* to see. Suppose you speak about a certain picture which you have never seen and about which you have only heard. You can know all that is possible to know about this picture, but if you have not seen it, you must first see it for yourself and verify all that you heard. Seeing oneself does not mean seeing always. You can see yourself for a time; then you cease to see.

One cannot speak to a person seriously until he begins to see himself, or at least realizes that he does not see himself and that it is necessary to do so.

Q. You said once that it is necessary to be serious in relation to the work. What does being serious mean?

A. First it is necessary to divide two things: being serious and taking things seriously. In thinking about this, people usually think about how to take things seriously, and which things, but never about what it means to be serious. I will tell you what it means. To be serious means to take nothing seriously – with the exception of things about which you know for certain that they are important in relation to what you want. This looks too small, but when you apply it in practice you will see that it is the only solution and the most necessary thing.

You see, people who *are not* cannot be taken seriously from this point of view. One moment they are serious, another moment they forget everything, a third moment they again try to find something, next moment they are quite satisfied with what they have. This means they are not – they do not exist. First they must exist.

Q. You said that certain negative emotions make serious work impossible. Does that mean they must be absolutely exterminated before one begins, and what do you mean by serious work?

A. By serious work I mean not only study but change. First you must study certain things, then you work to change them. But, since even study cannot go on without a certain change, because these two processes of study and change are not fully divided, a more serious study than just at the beginning can already be called serious work. With certain negative emotions serious work is practically impossible, because they will spoil all results: one side of you will work and another will spoil it. So if you start this work without conquering certain negative emotions, after some time you may find yourself in a worse state than before. It happened several times that people made continuation of work impossible for themselves because they wished to keep their negative emotions. There were moments when they realized it, but they did not make sufficient efforts at the time, and later the negative emotions became stronger.

Q. What causes people to make efforts?

A. Two things cause people to make efforts: if people want to get something, or if they want to get rid of something. Only, in ordinary conditions, without knowledge, people do not know what they can get rid of or what they can gain.

Q. Has one to have long training?

A. Everything has its own term of life, and if one waits too long it becomes useless and only bad results can come. Short-cuts come from time to time, but if we miss them, after some time they cease to come. It is necessary to remember all that was said at different times about effort, because effort is the basis of work. Everything we can gain is proportionate to effort;

the more effort we make, the more we can expect. We want very big things, we do not realize what enormous things we want. In the beginning efforts are small only because in ordinary life we do not make efforts; everything in life is done to avoid work, so it is difficult to realize and accept the necessity of effort. All our ways of thinking and doing have the tendency to avoid it at all costs.

Q. As regards change of being – it seems to be possible only with the effort to do something different. Therefore it is a vicious circle, since you cannot do anything different, because your being has not changed.

A. No, this is in life, not in school. It is different in any system or any kind of school. In ordinary life one can change nothing – we make one step to the right and one step to the left, and the situation remains the same. But if one works under school conditions, it is not the same. If one works quickly, change will be quick; if one works very little, change will be proportionate. You cannot buy a big house for a few pennies – you have to pay what it costs. Just think about it in this way: how much do you pay and how much change do you expect? We have talked enough and can understand enough. We must see how much we pay and then we will see how much we can get. We cannot expect more. Is that clear? How many real efforts do we make? If we deceive ourselves we cannot know, but if we do not deceive ourselves we can see how much we can expect.

Effort by itself does not help, because you do not know in what direction to make effort. That is why school is necessary. Man as he is can learn many things if these things are shown to him and explained, but by himself, if he gets these things, he will get them wrong and make mistakes, or he will simply not get them. If it were not like that, school would not be necessary – some people at least could get these things by themselves. But they cannot; nobody can.

Q. Then one cannot get much from books?

A. One can get some ideas, but a person will get one thing and miss ten other things. As a matter of fact, there are books in which very deep secrets are written, but people can read them and never get these secrets. It is quite safe. Again, this is connected with the fundamental idea that understanding depends not only on knowledge but also on being. That is why one needs a school. In school you cannot deceive yourself, and in school it can be explained to you why you cannot understand. It means there is something in you that you have to conquer in order to understand more. We do not see ourselves, but with help, with study, we can see much more. There are different degrees of seeing.

Q. Surely, if one makes a resolution. . . ?

A. That is only a word. If you were stronger, you would be able to make resolutions. As you are, you can make as many resolutions as you like and you will continue to talk about resolutions. The chief thing is our weakness in everything. We can have beautiful plans; we can say that we know what we want; we can even have an aim, but we cannot ‘do’ anything. This is why we have to learn. We have to learn how to do small things first, step by step. We must begin with small efforts. If we do not make small efforts, we will remain the same – one moment there, another moment not there. But if we make small efforts and remember about them, that will give a line, a direction.

Q. What is the best way to make efforts at moments when one feels the desire to change?

A. It is necessary to know in what sense you mean change. Also effort cannot be described. When one understands one’s situation, then inner contradictions and many other things give one a sufficient impulse for making efforts. So it is the realization of sleep, of inner divisions, buffers, negativeness and the unpleasantness of such things that will give one the impulse.

Q. If I think I have changed a little since I have attended these lectures, would it be imagination?

A. No. Certainly you have changed, because you begin to understand certain things you could not have understood before. But it may not be enough. Every small thing you learn changes something, but maybe more change is necessary. You see, it is always a big change as compared with how things would have been without it; but the change may not be great enough from the point of view of acquiring more change, or of getting something else, because change does not come of itself. It comes as a result of a definite effort in a definite direction. The need for effort always remains. Study is impossible without a certain struggle, because there are many mechanical things going on in us that cannot be used in the process of acquiring control.

Q. Where is the hall-mark to show that we have changed or not changed?

A. Many things can be said about it. It is a difficult thing to do, but if you could imagine what would happen to you if you were not connected with any kind of work this would answer your question; if you could compare yourself with yourself as you would be.

Q. Wouldn't you develop more and more 'I's as you struggle to change?

A. You will still have many 'I's, they will not disappear, but you will be able to control them and arrange them in a certain way.

Q. We have been told that it is useful to struggle with mechanical habits, but it was also suggested that it is not wise to try and alter things. Can this be explained further?

A. What I said about not trying to alter things referred to people in ordinary conditions of life, without school, without discipline, without methods of the work. I said then that in ordinary life people cannot change anything in themselves, because by changing one thing they unconsciously change another. Without knowing how to do it, it is quite useless. But in the work, particularly after some time, this danger does not exist any more, because by doing all that is advised one avoids this possibility of wrong change, since wrong change always happens in one of the useless functions. If one changes something in the ordinary way, one either begins to lie more, or identify more or express more negative emotions, because these things are more easily affected. But in the work we have many safeguards, above all self-remembering, which will stop another mechanical thing taking the place of the mechanical thing you destroy. Besides, you must understand that in order to change something it is necessary to know how things are connected and how to do it, and one cannot do it unless it is explained how to begin. There are definite points where one can begin and in order really to change something one must follow the way that is shown. For instance, it is necessary to change our wrong way of thinking, to make our thinking less formatory. But first we must find examples of formatory thinking. Then we can struggle with the expression of negative emotions, with considering, with imagination – all these are ways to struggle with habits. At the same time you can also struggle with other habits, but your struggle will only serve self-observation, because you cannot change them. You can change them only through the channels that are indicated. To struggle with habits directly and obtain right results more knowledge is necessary – you do not know enough yet. But it will do no harm because this effort will be balanced by self-remembering.

Q. Why has nobody discovered for himself the points from which to begin?

A. Because one 'I' discovers something, but at that moment another 'I' becomes interested in something else and takes all the energy; then while the second 'I' works, a third 'I' comes along, and so on. Man is always running in different directions. We do not realize how important this is.

Q. I do not see how one is to get anywhere unless one tries to go against habits and to change one's everyday life.

A. Yes, certainly one has to do something about it. The question is what one must change. People always try to change things that are not important, and what is important is disregarded and put off till to-morrow.

Q. Are there any good habits?

A. Habits of moving and instinctive centres can be good habits. Habits in intellectual or emotional centres can never be useful.

Q. Are all habits forms of identification?

A. Some habits are quite ordinary and harmless, but if you begin to put obstacles in their way it will give you good material for self-observation and you will be able to distinguish identification when it enters. This struggle introduces friction, and without friction you would not notice yourself, you would live as though in a thick fog, without noticing it. But the second step depends on your decision – you can be simply irritated by this friction, or you can use it.

Q. Shouldn't we do as little as possible in our present state of consciousness?

A. We must study ourselves. We can do nothing until we know: first we must know what we are and what to do. But in these lectures I have already given you several things you can do.

One can study oneself as one is. It is very important to study that. And, I repeat again, from the very first steps one must try to change certain things, because in our state of chaos we cannot even study ourselves. We have to bring in some order. We want to make an inventory of our house and so we begin to set down what there is in it; but suppose that, while we are doing it, other people in the house keep on moving the furniture, or the furniture moves itself. This is what actually happens – the furniture moves itself, so you must attach it to some definite place.

School knowledge is knowledge acquired through higher centres. So it is quite a different method. We are given certain principles and certain divisions which are not known ordinarily, and if we begin to study ourselves from this point of view we will discover many new things. When you are quite certain of these divisions and of these principles, then, observing yourself on this basis you discover things you cannot discover without knowing them. With the ordinary mind we see things only vaguely and they become confused: we cannot distinguish one from another, so we mix things. But if we are told how to do so, we can divide them even with our ordinary mind.

Q. So the observation of man 1, 2 and 3 is more complicated, more roundabout, but not necessarily wrong?

A. Observation may be quite right, but if he does not know how to divide his observations he cannot arrive at right results. Very much is based on right divisions.

Q. Is it good to start making observations of one division first?

A. No, you cannot do that, because you cannot know what you can do best at a given moment. So do what you find you can do best. For instance, you may decide to observe the intellectual function and, instead, you may find yourself in an emotional state. You cannot do one thing and then another and then a third, until you have control. And control comes last.

Q. Is there quite a lot of benefit to be derived by observing other people as well as oneself?

A. Yes, but there are dangerous moments. If one is capable of applying to oneself what one finds in other people, then it may be right, but as a rule one thinks that other people are one thing and oneself a different thing. In that case one may see things in other people and never apply them to oneself.

Q. It seems that self-observation and self-remembering become more difficult under conditions of bodily fatigue or when one is feeling unwell. How can this dependence be overcome?

A. Conditions of our body are conditions under which we live, so we have to observe and remember or not remember ourselves in these conditions if we intend to do it. We cannot begin with changing conditions.

Q. Surely observation is like introspection, it turns everything inwards?

A. No, introspection is the same as imagination, it is uncontrolled. It is useless and does not bring anything. But in observing you know what you are doing and why you are doing it, what you want to attain, what you want to know. It is not introspection, it is studying a very complicated machine. It is really mechanics, not psychology. Psychology comes later.

Q. How is it that one can observe oneself and still go on doing the same silly antics?

A. Because there is not one person but many. One person looks on, and another continues the antics. If you can see the different people in you in one case, it is good. If you can see them in several cases, things begin to become uncomfortable. If you can see them always, it is the beginning of work.

Q. I have observed that I am very unnatural. Does being a little more awake mean one is then more natural?

A. Not necessarily, because people, as they are in ordinary life, are in a very bad state, so in order to become natural eventually, they first have to become unnatural. You cannot expect to become natural at once. It would be possible if we started on the right level, but we start below level.

Q. Why is it that if one gets out of touch with the system all obstacles come up in their worst form? One is more negative, one does more useless talking and so on?

A. Because of work one gets a sort of new control and at the same time one loses mechanical control. So if one loses touch with the work, one loses this very small conscious control and one has already lost mechanical control. As a result one is worse off.

Q. Why is there more resistance in me to work in the system sense than to other kinds of work?

A. Because other kinds of work are mechanical and mechanical resistance is less to mechanical action. But if you take an originally conscious action it meets with all possible resistance.

Q. Can some deep shock that occurs in life be favourable to one's work?

A. Yes, but such shocks cannot replace work. All that can be acquired in the line of development of consciousness can only be acquired by effort. A shock cannot replace effort; it can act on centres but not on consciousness. Consciousness does not develop or grow by itself. A shock can for a short time open up higher centres and connect one with them for a moment. It can concentrate for a certain time all the energy in our body that is dispersed everywhere, and draw it together. You can then awake for a moment, but as a rule you fall more deeply asleep later. You can even lose consciousness, or be in a very low state afterwards. So no shock can increase the amount of consciousness; this is a very important thing to understand. People usually mix the idea of consciousness and functions. Both must develop, but the development of one does not produce the development of the other.

Q. What do you mean by development of functions?

A. If centres are balanced and acquire sufficient speed, they become connected with the higher centres. This is the easiest way to understand it, but there can be other descriptions. In this state of consciousness we can only be aware of the work of lower centres; in self-consciousness we can be aware of more. But first we must start cleaning.

Q. I understand that no effort to be conscious is ever wasted, and yet that, by being negative, we lose the energy we make. How can both be true?

A. This is a great mistake, for it is quite against the principles of the work to say that no efforts can be wasted. People can make efforts all their life and they can all be wasted if they make them in a wrong way. Take any wrong school with some kind of twisted idea. People belonging to such a school can make an enormous amount of efforts and all of them can be lost. Even in the right way one can make efforts for some time and then, if one stops, all those efforts will be lost. So efforts can be wasted if they are not followed by a right attitude and by other efforts.

Q. What explains the sense of urgency created in oneself in a better state?

A. In the beginning it is magnetic centre, for it has a dim realization of the unreality of ordinary conceptions, intentions, possibilities. Then, when one begins to study, at a certain moment realization of sleep becomes emotional and gains strength. Lack of understanding means lack of emotion. Only formative centre can work without emotion. Every right realization becomes emotional. One of our obstacles is that we are too dull, not emotional enough. The intellect is a very weak machine. This is why the emotional centre must be free of negative emotions, because otherwise we use all its energy on them and can do nothing.

Q. Is any energy produced by self-observation?

A. Certainly. Every kind of work produces energy, only some kinds produce a small amount, so that it is necessary to make consecutive efforts for a long time to produce sufficient energy. And some other kind of work may produce much energy at once. Sometimes an effort may look quite small and be very big in reality, and sometimes a very big effort may be very small.

Q. How can I learn to *feel* more? I live so much in my head. I get too little out of life and there is a barrier between me and the system.

A. This is everybody's problem, because if people could feel more, many things would be easier for them. But they have been for a long time unconsciously creating so many protective devices against feeling that there cannot be any at present. It is necessary to find a beginning; without a beginning nothing is possible. You must begin somewhere; there are things that are more difficult and others that are less difficult. What you really need is more observation and a certain kind of thinking about yourself or about something else. If you persist in this thinking it can make you emotional; only you must find for yourself what it is; it is impossible to give general advice, suitable for everybody. Every person has some points which bring him nearer to an emotional state; it is necessary to find them. Whatever happens later, at present one has to begin in this way.

Q. Before I came to the work I was full of little enthusiasms. I see that many of them were based on imagination, but now I have almost no feeling at all.

A. As I just said, this is one of our biggest problems – how to make oneself more emotional – because we cannot go far on intellect alone. The only thing is effort – effort and remembering different lines of the work, trying not to identify, trying to remember oneself, trying this and that – effort, effort. ... If you make sufficient effort, you will become more emotional. But the fact that this is a constant question that people ask – or if they do not ask, they feel this problem – shows that people do not make enough effort.

Q. You say more effort is needed. Do you mean effort to feel emotion or effort to work?

A. It is simply effort to work. You cannot make effort to feel emotional, no effort will help in that – *but you can make efforts*. If you are doing something, you can do it without effort, trying to do as little as possible, or you can put much effort into it. Emotion can appear only as the result of a certain pressure. In ordinary conditions, in ordinary life, it only happens; something happens and brings you to an emotional state. The question is how to produce emotion, how to make ourselves emotional. And I say that in our present state there is only one thing – effort. But not effort to produce emotion. There is no such effort. But, very strong continuous effort in any work you do will make you more emotional after some time – not at once, certainly. A certain period of efforts on different lines is bound to increase your emotions.

Q. Why should making efforts be so difficult?

A. Efforts may look difficult because we are not prepared in our mind; we do not think rightly about them. We do not even accept mentally that it is necessary to make efforts. That creates the biggest difficulty. The necessity for making efforts comes as a shock, as a new thing.

Q. I cannot by effort reach a state that sometimes comes accidentally.

A. You say it comes accidentally. If it is what I mean, it comes as a result of your efforts, only it does not come at the time. But if you had not made efforts it would not have come accidentally, so it is not really accidental. The more efforts you make, the more you will have these accidental moments of self-remembering, of understanding, of being emotional. It is all the result of effort. Only in this case we cannot connect the cause and the effect. The reason why we cannot connect them is probably due to many small things, such as identification, imagination, and things like that. But the cause is there and at a certain moment it will bring a result. We must never expect immediate results. It is necessary to work for a long time to create permanent standards, in order to have immediate results; and even that comes only in very emotional states. If we could by will or desire or intention become more emotional, many things would be different. But we cannot. We are very low emotionally and that is why most of the work we do now, even if we really do it, can have no immediate results. But no right effort is lost, something always remains; only it must be followed by other and bigger efforts. So the first question is how to become more emotional, and that we cannot do, except indirectly, by making efforts. The second question is how to use emotional states when they come, and that is what we must prepare ourselves for, since it is possible. Emotional states come and we lose them in identification and things like that. But we could use them.

Q. When emotional states come, is the only way to prolong them to self-remember?

A. I said use them. Certainly if you remember yourself you will see many ways of using this state when it comes; it is a matter of observation. It will give you a different power of thinking, different power of understanding. It cannot be described because it must be a personal experience.

Q. Can emotions be used to see more objectively?

A. Yes they can, when you have control of them. Emotions can be used as definite instruments for acquiring knowledge only if you can control them. And what does control mean? It means not admitting identification and considering. Control is the second step, study is the first step.

We speak about emotions, but many of them we know only by name. They are so mixed with other things, we identify with them so much that we do not realize all that we can get from them if we could take them in the right way. All that we call emotions – anger, fear, boredom – they can all be turned upside down, and then we will find that they have quite a different taste. All emotions can be useful, they are a kind of windows, or additional senses. Only now we cannot use them, except for creating new illusions; but if we used them for seeing things as they are, we would learn many new things.

Q. How can anger or hate help?

A. By turning it against yourself. Hate yourself, find in yourself what to hate. When one becomes angry with oneself one can see many things.

Q. Then that means self-criticism?

A. More than that; criticism is simply intellectual, but this is *feeling*. All intellectual activity is preparing material, and then the emotional centre will begin to work with this material. Intellectual centre cannot, by itself, help in awakening. Only work on the emotional centre can do this, and we can only awake through unpleasant emotions – awakening through pleasant emotions has not been invented yet. The most unpleasant thing is to go against oneself, against one's views, convictions, inclinations. Awakening is not for those who are afraid of unpleasant things, it is only for those who wish to awake and realize what being asleep means and that much help is necessary, a great deal of shaking. This is the real point: how to provide perpetual shaking for oneself and how to agree to it.

Q. To some extent it seems possible to train the thinking and moving centres, but can you say how we could train the emotional centre?

A. We can begin in two ways: first, as I have often said already, by not expressing unpleasant emotions. We have proof that it is possible, because we see that we do not do so through fear. For example, a soldier does not express his unpleasant feelings before his officer, because he knows that if he does his punishment will be severe. So if it is possible to refrain mechanically, it is possible to do so consciously. We can act on our emotions by separating mind from emotions. Mind can not only be trained but also taught to stand aside and look at emotions. Then, after a time, the emotional centre begins to realize that it is not worth while going on if mind does not follow.

Then, as a rule, everyone has about five or six kinds of emotion for certain occasions. So everyone can know beforehand what will happen; the repertoire is very limited, so we can and must study ourselves from this point of view. It is really much easier than we think, and it is quite possible to foresee in advance the things that will happen. If we talk seriously to ourselves for half an hour, we can stop our emotions, because we know all the associations that will produce them. It would not be easy if our repertoire of emotions were unlimited; but emotions for to-morrow are very limited; you know very well that it would be difficult to think of a new one. But you must know all the associations very well, and you must know the ways by which emotions ordinarily come.

It is the most difficult thing; emotional centre is the strongest one we have. Reason wants to stop emotion, but it is weak, and emotion is strong. One can stop it only in an indirect way, and not at the moment.

Q. Is it bad to try?

A. No, it is good; then, little by little, you may find out how to stop it, for it can only be done by skill. The only way is to create new attitudes opposed to the emotions you want to stop. Then, in the long run, the attitude may prove stronger than the emotion.

So there are two ways to stop emotion: first, by being conscious, secondly, by creating right attitudes. But for each particular case a different attitude is necessary, so it is long work. We are not only machines, we are already damaged machines. In order to repair the machine, it is necessary to work hard.

Q. What protective attitude against negative emotions do you suggest?

A. As I said, first – trying to remember yourself. If you are conscious of all that is going on in you, you can stop them when they are still small. When they are big, you cannot. Then, in observing yourself, you find things that make you more asleep, more mechanical. You must separate them from things that can be useful.

Q. This is about oneself. But how to protect oneself from the negative emotions of others?

A. Our identification brings to us the negative emotions of other people; it makes us susceptible to them. If you have a definite case, you can visualize the possibility of not being identified, and you will see that you will be less susceptible. But even better than visualizing it, try it in actual fact. The relation of identification to negative emotions is not a theory, it can be easily verified. Identification is more easy to understand than emotions; there are hundreds of different negative emotions, but identification is always the same. The first step towards non-identification is self-observation. One must watch all impressions the moment they come in. Identification works both in the case of attraction and repulsion.

Q. I see mechanicalness to a greater degree now and this seems to involve me in a greater identification, and fear, and a sense of being caught up.

A. If you mean fear of mechanicalness in yourself, this fear can have a useful purpose, because you already know enough about it, how to struggle with it, how to oppose it.

Q. I have been trying to stop expression of negative emotions in order to struggle with mechanicalness, but these efforts run down very quickly and the need to wake up gets forgotten.

A. This is because you try it on small emotions. If you try not to express serious emotions you will keep awake longer. If you remembered to struggle with the expression of really strong emotions, at the right moment you would see the difference.

Q. I am puzzled by the question of expressing emotions: if it is beyond ordinary human experience to feel positive emotion, and we are told not to express negative emotions, is it meant that we are not to express any emotion whatsoever?

A. No, it is necessary to navigate between the two. We must be as emotional as possible, for we miss many perceptions, ideas, understandings, because at the moment we are not emotional. Many perceptions come through emotion. We have no positive emotions, but we can say that we have negative emotions and pleasant and unpleasant emotions that are not negative.

Q. Positive means not negative?

A. Yes, and much more besides. An emotion that cannot become negative gives enormous understanding, has an enormous cognitive value. It connects things that cannot be connected in an ordinary state. To have positive emotions is advised and recommended in religions, but they do not say how to get them. They say, 'Have faith, have love'. How? Christ says, 'Love your enemies'. It is not for us; we cannot even love our friends. It is the same as saying to a blind man, 'You must see!' A blind man cannot see, otherwise he would not be a blind man. That is what positive emotion means.

Q. How can we learn to love our enemies?

A. Learn to love yourself first – you do not love yourself enough; you love your false personality, not yourself.

It is difficult to understand the New Testament or Buddhist writings, for they are notes taken in school. One line of these writings refers to one level and another to another level.

Q. Have you a name for an emotion that is not negative?

A. It can be pleasure or suffering. But both can become negative, for the tendency is there: every emotion can either become negative or give birth to other negative emotions.

Q. Does not instinctive centre make a good substitute for the emotional? For instance, love of animals and small children

A. We cannot speak of animals when we speak about man. Instinctive negative emotions have their own place and their own normal causes, but the emotional centre borrows their results and substitutes imaginary causes. It is very interesting to see the lack of symmetry between pleasant and unpleasant emotions. Pleasant emotions cannot grow much, they are limited. Unpleasant emotions can grow. But this refers only to our present state of consciousness; in another state the symmetry is reestablished, for there pleasant emotions can also grow. Of course, we cannot verify this until we are in another state of consciousness. Why can unpleasant emotions grow? Because there are no limits to the abnormal state of the machine. But pleasures are limited by our powers of perception. This is one of the unpleasant sides of our situation.

Q. I think we are so used to judging by results that my difficulty is that I cannot judge whether I have achieved something or not when I make efforts in the work.

A. I quite understand. But you see, it is too early to speak about results. The time will come, it may be very soon, when you will begin to see some results, but not yet. In ordinary conditions we judge by results. If we study a language we know that after some time we will be able to read short sentences, then small paragraphs, then short stories. But if you take the psychological side of the work, you have to make efforts to observe, efforts to remember yourself, and at first you will see no visible results. Then, after some time, you will see some results, but you cannot bargain about it.

Q. But how can I tell whether I have established something for myself that will take me further?

A. Only you can answer that. It depends on you – how much you understand, how much you are prepared. One day there is one situation, another day another situation. One day one works, another day one can make a small mistake which may make one lose all the results of this work. The next day again one may work. One is changing all the time, so up to a certain definite stage it is impossible to say.

Q. At what stage is it that man cannot lose anything?

A. It is so far that it is useless to discuss it. *We* can lose everything. But even this ability not to lose comes step by step. At a certain stage man cannot lose one thing, then, further on, he cannot lose another thing, and so on. It comes little by little.

Q. I want to know how to increase my valuation of the work?

A. It is impossible to answer this question, because only you can know how to increase your valuation of the work. You must think; you must compare ordinary ideas with these ideas; you must try to find in what sense these ideas help you. Everything we do in the work has the tendency to increase valuation, so try not to miss anything that is given, because all the ideas have this aim. Every principle will increase your valuation of the work, it cannot diminish it. But there can be no special method for this.

Q. I wonder if as much as one desires other things in life, so much it takes away from one's desire to work.

A. Not necessarily. There are many things we can have in life and yet work. It is quite wrong to think they are always contradictory – though they may be contradictory. One may desire such things in life as make work impossible in one or another way. So one must learn to choose between desires, for some things are incompatible. It is formative to divide things into 'things in life' and 'things in the work' and put everything together as you do. You must divide better, see better.

Q. Is there any means of distinguishing between important and unimportant things? My whole life is filled with worrying over the next thing I am going to do and I lose sight of the general idea of the system.

A. Only experience can show that, and a sincere attitude. If you are sincere, or try to be sincere, and at the same time try to observe these things, after some time you will see that the difficulty of distinguishing becomes smaller and smaller, and you will see what is unimportant. One cannot describe what is important and what is not, because it is subjective; one moment one thing is important, another moment another. Again, personalities enter here: what is important for one personality may be unimportant for another.

One of the first things to remember is about different personalities in you and, particularly when you are in an emotional state, not to think 'I'. Personalities based on likes and dislikes are all wrong; one must always start with the personality based on magnetic centre. Then you can see other personalities, whether they contradict it or not. This idea of different personalities, the idea that you are not one, that you are many, must always be connected with self-remembering.

Q. I have never been able to get any evidence that anybody has achieved self-remembering.

A. You will not see the evidence. If all other people were able to remember themselves and you were not, it would not help you.

Q. Yes it would, because they would have more information.

A. For themselves, not for you. You must prove it to yourself. No one can prove it for you.

Q. Because we work on ourselves, it does not mean that we shall gain higher consciousness, does it?

A. No, it may take a very long time. We want to acquire control of higher states of consciousness, but before that the system speaks of acquiring control over ordinary faculties, over thoughts, over emotions, and in acquiring this control we must eliminate certain things and create the possibility of self-remembering. So first we must acquire control over simple,

ordinary things. Only then can we expect more. In this system there are gradual steps, one cannot jump.

Q. I find that I am prevented from thinking practically about the ideas of the system by a destructive attitude which starts by trying to find difficulties and objections. What is the best method of weakening this attitude?

A. By studying. As a matter of fact, this is interesting as an observation, because many people, not necessarily only those in the work, live only on objections; they only think themselves clever when they find an objection to something. When they do not find an objection, they do not feel themselves to be working, or thinking, or anything.

I notice from the questions people ask that they do not understand how new things come. The difficulty is that we are too accustomed to think in absolutes – all or nothing. But it is necessary to understand that everything new comes first in flashes. It comes and then disappears, comes again and disappears again. Only, after a certain time these flashes become longer and then still longer.

Q. By what means can we prolong these flashes?

A. By repeating the causes that produced them. I do not want to give an example, because it will lead to imagination. All I will say is that, for instance, by certain efforts of self-remembering one can see things that one cannot see now. Our eyes are not as limited as we think; there are many things they can see but do not notice.

Q. What are our greatest difficulties?

A. Absence of understanding and slowness of understanding, because understanding generally comes about two years behind time. Another principle I have already spoken about and which must be remembered is that work does not wait, it does not remain the same. One year has certain requirements, the next year something else is required, and so it goes on. And generally it happens that people are ready for the requirements of two years ago. People who wish to continue must raise their standard; and this must not be done at my suggestion: you must think for yourselves in what sense and in what form the standard should be raised. You must think about details – things which, to begin with, were only advised, must now become rules for you (but not in the sense of ‘school-rules’, using the word ‘school’ in its ordinary meaning). The necessity must be understood. We have come to the stage when we must be serious, and this means self-limitation, limiting false personality. Freedom of ‘I’ depends on limiting false personality; both cannot be free together, one or another must be sacrificed.

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