

CHAPTER XIV

Personal difficulties – Necessity of finding one's most urgent and persistent difficulty – Negative emotions, imagination, formatory thinking – Creating new points of view – Struggle with identification – Three categories of negative emotions and how to deal with them – Transformation of negative emotions – Irritation – Laziness – Dull negative states – Different forms of imagination – Giving up suffering – Voluntary suffering as the greatest force we can have – The role of suffering in organic life – Man is specially made for evolution – responsibility in personal work – Necessity of working on many lines at once – Formatory thinking and its characteristics – Associative thinking – The need of higher centres to understand truth – Meditation – Right thinking – Imaginary conversations – Different meanings of faith – Life after death

NOW THE TIME HAS COME for you to think about personal things that are near and practical. We have spoken much about theory and you use too many words without asking yourselves what you mean by them. Now we must deal with facts, we must understand where we can start from as we are. At any given moment there are things we could control but do not control through laziness, lack of knowledge, suspicion or something else. We must think about these things – that would be right thinking.

Try to find your personal difficulties. I do not mean difficulties of an external kind, but inner difficulties – personal features, personal inclinations and disinclinations, attitudes, prejudices, activities which can stop your understanding and prevent you working.

All the difficulties you can meet with in your personal work can be roughly divided into three categories or classes.

First of all, negative emotions. For some people this is the first and perhaps the chief point, so they have to begin with the study of negative emotions and study of methods of non-identification. Some people cannot stop being negative, generally in some particular direction, and when negative emotions become hardened and permanent they usually stop every kind of work, everything becomes mechanical and a person cannot progress.

The second point is imagination, particularly negative imagination, for it is as bad as negative emotions. By imagination I do not mean day-dreaming; I mean rather imagining things that do not exist either in oneself or in other people. Everybody must try to find this kind of imagination in himself and the particular things to which it relates.

The third point is formatory thinking and formatory talking. If one does not have a picture of what is formatory and what is not formatory, one cannot progress. It is necessary to get this picture. It is very useful to find some good examples of formatory thought and to keep these examples in mind. Then it will not be difficult to recognize it when you catch yourself thinking formatorily or hear someone else speaking formatorily.

These are the chief kinds of difficulties you have to find in yourselves. For one person one thing is more permanent; for another person another. Later you will probably discover many more things, but in the beginning you will find that it is roughly one of these.

One can have a difficulty that is most urgent, and everybody can find which of these three is theirs. You must find what is most pressing to struggle against and concentrate on that. There must be reasons for deciding on one or another, but all three refer to everybody. For most people it is necessary to begin with negative emotions. For some others it is necessary to begin with imagination, for they invent things and so never come to real things. And for yet others it is necessary to struggle with formatory thinking, for if they don't they will always remain in the same place.

Q. You said there were many ways of destroying negative emotions. What are they?

A. First you must know them. You must know in yourself the most important negative

emotion, because everybody has a pet one and you must begin with that. You must know where to begin, and when you know that, you can study practical methods. But, first and last, when you find negative emotions in yourself, you must understand that the causes are in you and not in other people – they are internal, not external. When you realize that they are in yourself, results will begin to come according to the depth of your conviction and the continuance of your memory.

You see, what I want you to understand is that each person separately has a certain definite point which prevents him from working rightly. This point must be found. Each person has many such points, but one is bigger than the others. So each of you separately must find your chief difficulty and, having found it, work against it. This may help you for a certain time, and then perhaps you will have to find another difficulty, and another, and another. Until you find your difficulty of the present moment you will not be able to work in the right way.

The first difficulty for everybody is the word 'I'. You say 'I' and do not think that this is only a small part of you that is speaking. But behind and beyond this there must be something else, and this is what you have to find. It may be a particular kind of negative emotion, a particular kind of identification, or imagination, or many other things.

You must understand that all the difficulties people have are such because people are such. Difficulties can disappear or change only when people change. Nobody can make their difficulties easier for them. Suppose a good magician came and took away all their difficulties, it would be a very bad service to them, for people would be satisfied to remain as they are because there would be no reason for them to wish to change. Try to think what makes things very difficult or takes much of your attention.

Q. I think my difficulty is self-pride.

A. Self-pride makes a good servant but a bad master. But how to make it a servant? Only by beating it. Take the example in the New Testament about turning the other cheek. An ordinary person will say that self-pride will not let him. But if you can turn self-pride into a good servant it will make you do that. And this is important, because to be able to do that means other things as well – a quicker perception, control over the emotional and moving centres and many other things.

Q. I don't quite see how to begin finding my chief difficulty.

A. Everybody must try to find his own difficulty, not somebody else's, and in order to do that one must get rid of one's prejudices and of thinking that ideas are one thing, work another and life yet another. So long as you think like that you will not understand. You must realize that you work here for your own personal aims and that there is no difference between life and work. There are many things that stand in your way in a life sense now, and in order to conquer them and improve matters you must do what the work suggests. The results will be seen in ordinary life, in relation to people, to things and to the work you have to do in life. So try to ask questions only referring to your own personal difficulties. Abstract things we may admit occasionally, but remember that they are not the first aim.

Q. How can I struggle with possessiveness?

A. First of all mind must become free from justification of it. *Mind* must be separate, it must not identify. We have a certain control of mind, to a certain extent we can command here. If you decide not to justify a certain negative emotion, it is already the beginning of the struggle. Then the mind will act on emotions. What is the cause of negative emotions? They are always caused by other people, it is always other people's fault. That must be stopped. You must recognize that the cause of your negative emotions is in you. And you must not find reasons for negative emotions – it is always easy to find reasons.

Q. Should we try to discover what it was in us that was demanding expression of a negative emotion?

A. Very often it is imitation. Somebody else expresses negative emotion and something in

you admires him, and thinks: how beautifully he expresses this negative emotion, and wants to imitate, and you do not know it. It may be many other things, but very often it is imitation.

Q. When you say we must work on fundamental ideas of the system, do you mean like work on negative emotions? Can it be called work if one tries hard to work on oneself in this way?

A. In any case, whatever you call it, you have got to work on negative emotions, first by studying them, then trying not to express them, then going further and finding your own favourite negative emotion. Suppose somebody has no self-pity, then it is easy for him to work on self-pity; but he may have some other emotion, his own particular one, against which it is difficult to struggle. Generally one has only a few principal negative emotions, although some exceptional people may have more.

Q. I find it possible to struggle with smaller negative emotions, but sometimes they are too strong and there is an explosion.

A. I tried to explain that negative emotions are different, and you cannot use the same methods against all of them. In all cases you must be prepared. It is too late to think when you are already in the negative emotion. You must study identification and be able not to identify; you must be able to think in the right way – not at that moment but before and after. And you must be able to use negative emotions for self-remembering. But before all that you must be able to control the manifestation of negative emotions. If you cannot control the manifestation, you cannot start struggling with negative emotions themselves. But you must understand that you can do nothing when you are in the negative emotion; you can do it before and after. Sometimes, when you are better prepared, you can use them for self-remembering, but that is quite a special thing. In the work everything can be used, all wrong functions can be used, so negative emotions of all kinds can be useful as a help for self-remembering. By that I mean that you can train yourself in such a way that negative emotions will remind you of the necessity of remembering yourself.

Q. Did you say that the intellectual centre could control the emotional centre if we knew how. Can you tell us how?

A. The whole thing is to learn how. Find emotions connected with a certain kind of thinking, with certain points of view. If you acquire new points of view, then after some time the emotion connected with the old points of view will disappear. Many emotions depend on points of view. But it is slow work.

Q. Why must it be done slowly?

A. Because nobody can do it quickly. It takes some time to change points of view, to have new points of view established. It means breaking down buffers, and this is a painful thing. Besides, buffers cannot be destroyed at once, because then one will have no control at all. In the ordinary way one controls oneself with the help of buffers. So buffers must be destroyed gradually and will must be created at the same time. If a buffer is destroyed, will must be put in its place, otherwise one will not be protected by the buffer and one will have no will – so one will be in a worse state than with the buffer. That is why mechanical systems of self-development are dangerous, because by some mechanical means, without knowing what one is doing, one can destroy one or another important buffer without putting anything in its place, and become worse off than before. Means must be conscious, one must know.

Q. Can one always find one's chief negative emotion, or only sometimes?

A. One can if one is sincere about it. It is a question of sincerity, and of a certain effort, but we do not want to make this effort, so we never do. Even if we decide to look for our negative emotions, we concentrate on small emotions. We are never sincere enough to admit what our chief negative emotion is, because sometimes it looks ugly.

When I said it is necessary to find one's chief negative emotion I meant not the most important but the most persistent. If you find them and try to work on them, it often helps to see against what other emotions you can struggle. There are usually two or three you can

struggle with. But you must be more precise and not just talk about emotions in general. General talk about emotions is good for general thinking, but not for acting. You can act only in relation to definite facts.

Q. Are not the most dangerous negative emotions jealousy, fear, hate, anger?

A. No, this is a wrong classification. The most useful classification is by the degree of identification, for it does the most harm. You take these as negative emotions of the first degree, but it is not necessarily true. For some people maybe self-pity is the worst. For another person the worst thing may be the feeling of injustice. You never know which is worst, because it depends on identification and on features, since the capacity to feel certain emotions particularly strongly and identify with them may be the chief feature of false personality. It is different for different people.

Q. Which negative emotions has one to transform?

A. All of them. There is no need to make a catalogue. One must first begin with those one can tackle, and then pass to more difficult and still more difficult, if it is possible.

Negative emotions are an intermediate state between sanity and insanity. A man whose centre of gravity is in negative emotions cannot be called sane and cannot develop. He must become normal first.

Negative emotions must be divided into three categories; first, the more usual, more ordinary everyday emotions. You must observe them and must already have a certain control over their expression. When you have acquired a certain control of non-expression of these negative emotions, the question comes as to how to deal with the emotions themselves. You must start dealing with them by trying not to identify as often and as much as you can, for they are always connected with identification, and if you conquer identification, they disappear.

The second category of emotions do not appear every day. They are the more difficult, more complex emotions depending on some mental process, such as suspicion, hurt feelings and many things like that. They are harder to conquer. You can deal with them by creating a right mental attitude, by thinking – not at the time, but in-between, when you are quiet. Try to find the right attitude, the right point of view, and make it permanent. If you create right thinking, that will take all power from these negative emotions.

Then there is the third category, much more intense, much more difficult and rare. Against them you can do nothing. These two methods – struggle with identification and creating right attitudes – do not help. When such emotions come, you can do only one thing: you must try to remember yourself – remember yourself with the help of the emotion. If you learn to use them for self-remembering, they may diminish and disappear after some time. But for this you have to be prepared.

At present, since you do not know which emotion belongs to which category, you must try to use all three methods for all of them. But later you will see that they are divided into these categories and in one case one thing helps, in another case another thing. In all cases you must be prepared. As I said in the beginning, it will be difficult to struggle with them or conquer them, but you will learn through time. Only, never mix emotions with the expression of negative emotions. That always comes first. As long as you cannot stop the expression, it means that you can do nothing about the emotions themselves. So before you can do anything else you must learn to control the manifestation of negative emotions. If you learn to control the expression, then you can start.

Q. It seems that the effort to remember oneself makes one more vulnerable and more easily swayed by emotions. How can one protect oneself?

A. One cannot protect oneself in the beginning. One has to risk it if it works that way. Actually it works both ways: from one point of view it makes you more sensitive; from another point of view it gives you more control.

Q. With one's habitual negative emotions, is it some particular feature in oneself that always brings them?

A. Quite possibly, but if you practise non-identifying you will see that. You identify with many, many things, not only with negative emotions. From morning till night you pass from one identification to another, but when you try more than usually not to identify, you may notice many negative emotions you have not seen before. Some you may see full-size, of others you may only notice their tails disappearing. If you try noticing and not identifying, it will make you stronger in dealing with emotions.

Q. What is the right way to find interest in things without identification?

A. There is no right way. You must either think about right things or connect everything with self-remembering. If you can think about right things, you can be interested in them without identification, but if you become identified, all thinking disappears and it becomes just a formatory repetition of words.

Q. One negative emotion which is always happening to me sets me against people whom I think I have neglected or harmed in some way. It is based on identification. I cannot see how to escape from it.

A. It is difficult to say. We are so mechanical that in some cases we are not responsible. At the same time one has no right to say 'I am not responsible, so it does not matter what I do'. One must do what one can. But non-identifying will not help in this case. If you feel you have done something wrong, try not to do it again. Very often people give all their energy to thinking about the wrong things they did and next day do exactly the same.

Q. Did you say that negative emotions would be useful if we could be not identified with them?

A. If we could be not identified, we would have different results. That would help very definitely, since it would give orientation to life and many other things we do not know yet.

Yes, I said *if we could* not identify they would be very useful functions. As they are, they are not useful. All negative emotions that we cannot avoid become useful functions if we use them for self-remembering. Some people manage to do that and get two things at once – elimination of the negative emotion and creation of self-remembering. If you have a persistent negative emotion and by right thinking connect it with self-remembering, then, after some time, it will help self-remembering, and after some more time, if you persist, the emotion will disappear. So they can serve a useful purpose if you can use them; but if you identify with them, they are no good at all.

Q. Is there anything one can do about negative emotions when one is in a bad state?

A. One must not believe in this bad state. Equally one must not believe in a good state, that it will always remain. Both bad and good state will change. If one believes too much in a good state, a bad state comes and one is not prepared, and as a result one is too much affected. If one identifies too much with one's bad state, one feels that one can do nothing. Bad state or good state, one has to go on – there is only one way.

Q. Does strong jealousy come under the second category?

A. That is for you to decide. It may have very many different forms and manifestations. Generally it is based on justification – mentally you agree with it, approve it, prepare the ground for it. When you stop preparing the ground, it may disappear or be transformed into something different. But this is too general a description. There are ten thousand different kinds of jealousy, but the basis of them, almost inevitably, is that you feel you have the right to be jealous. You must always remember that all causes of negative emotions are in us.

Q. Are negative emotions catching? Is that what makes family life so difficult?

A. Yes, it is a definite fact that negative emotions are very infectious, but particularly infectious for yourself. If you have certain negative emotions and admit them, if you do not deny them in your mind they are bound to be repeated and become stronger and stronger.

Q. Self-pity, to me, is not an unpleasant emotion, though I consider it to be a negative one. Should it be stopped?

A. Particularly if it is pleasant. When self-pity is pleasant it is a particularly poisonous emotion.

Q. How can I think rightly about self-pity?

A. In thinking about it you must create in your mind a permanent solvent, an attitude which will break up your self-pity when it appears. Find the comical side of it, the absurd side, find the insane side, do not stand on ceremony with yourself. If you succeed in forming a permanent attitude, then as soon as self-pity appears, pour the solvent over it and it will dissolve. Find what is foolish, what is mad in self-pity, not by analysis but by examples. You will find many features in it if you think and observe sincerely, and if you keep them in mind, self-pity will not dare to raise its head.

Q. But if you find it does not disappear?

A. That means a wrong attitude, and not only attitude. Self-pity is not quite normal, so study it, find all its strange features, try to be ashamed of it, do not think or speak about it as if it were something harmless or pleasant.

Q. I find in myself a very great self-indulgence which I believe is my chief weakness and obstacle in the work. But by my own efforts I do not know how to struggle with it in any but the most feeble way.

A. Very often you cannot fight, or you do not know how to begin to work against some special weakness, but it does not matter. Work against *any* weakness and you will work against *this* weakness. It is a very easy way of justifying yourself to say you do not know how to fight against a weakness. Leave it alone and fight against some other weakness – the result will be the same. In special cases we have to return to some difficulty again and again, but in general all efforts lead in the same direction, whether it is struggle against negativeness, imagination or anything else.

Q. Why does giving way to anger give me a definite feeling of exhilaration?

A. First because it is a habit, second because it is easy. Every giving way to a habit gives pleasure. The machine always likes to work by the line of least resistance, but in the work we must go by the line of strongest resistance

Q. Fear need not be a negative emotion? It may be necessary?

A. It is the basis of many negative emotions. We do not speak about instinctive emotions now. Negative emotions of the instinctive centre are necessary, but others are almost all useless. But even instinctive emotions can lead to imagination. For instance, one may be afraid of snakes and, living in a country where there is only a snake and half, one may pass one's life in fear of snakes. This is imagination

Q. Isn't one often afraid of things one knows nothing about?

A. Fear is simply a certain state; it can be without any object. This shows how useless negative emotions are. We often invent objects for an emotion when the emotion is already there. Take envy, fear, suspicion. We think the emotion is produced in us by something outside, when in reality it is in us, we only look for an object afterwards, and in this way we justify it.

Q. I still cannot understand why all causes of negative emotions are in myself.

A. If you observe yourself, you will see. Causes outside remain the same, but sometimes they produce negative emotion in you, sometimes not. Why? Because real causes are in you, there are only apparent causes outside. If you are in a good state, if you are remembering yourself, if you are not identifying, then nothing that happens outside (relatively speaking, for I do not mean catastrophes) can produce a negative emotion in you. If you are in a bad state, identified, immersed in imagination, then everything just a little unpleasant will produce a violent emotion. It is a question of observation.

Q. But I still do not see how some things, for instance, people's behaviour, could fail to produce negative emotion.

A. They are machines. Why should the behaviour of machines produce negative emotion? If a machine hits you, it is your own fault, you must not be in the way of the machine. You may have a negative emotion, but it is not the fault of the machine, it is your own fault. Other people do not have as much power over you as you think, it is only the result of identification. You can be much more free if you do not identify, and sometimes you *are* more free. That is why I say it must be observed. If you observe well, you will see that sometimes you identify more, sometimes less; and because of this, sometimes you are absolutely in the power of negative emotions and sometimes you have a certain resistance. It may take a long time to learn how to resist negative emotions, but it is not impossible. You must understand one thing about negative emotions, we are too much afraid of them, we consider them too powerful. We can show resistance to them if we persist and do not consider them inevitable and omnipotent.

Q. I could see myself losing my temper the other day when I was talking to somebody, but I could not stop it. How can I control temper?

A. This is an example of mechanicalness. You cannot control your temper when it has already begun to appear – it is then too late. Struggle must begin in your mind, you must find your way to think rightly about a definite difficulty. Suppose you have to meet a certain man who irritates you. Your temper shows itself, you do not like it. How can you stop it? You must begin with the study of your thinking. What do you think about this man – not what you feel when you are irritated, but what do you think about him at quiet moments? You may find that in your mind you argue with him, you prove to him that he is wrong, you tell him all his mistakes, you find that, generally, he behaves wrongly towards you. This is where you are wrong. You must learn to think rightly. Then, if you do, it will happen like this although emotion is much quicker than thought, emotion is a temporary thing, but thought can be made continuous, so whenever the emotion jumps out, it hits against this continuous thought and cannot go on and manifest itself. So you can struggle with the expression of negative emotions, as in this example, only by creating continuous right thinking. To explain what right thinking is in a few words is impossible, it is necessary to study it. If you remember what I said about parts of centres you will come to that, because in most cases and most conditions in ordinary life people think only with the mechanical part of the intellectual centre, which is the formatory apparatus. This is not sufficient. It is necessary to use the intellectual part of the intellectual centre. Identifying is the chief reason why we do not use it. Trying to self-remember and trying not to identify is the best means of passing into higher parts of centres. But we always forget about identification and about self-remembering.

Q. Can conquering negative emotions, like fear, create energy?

A. Very much so. This is one of the best means of collecting energy. All possibilities of development are contained in conquering negative emotions and transforming them.

A. A man with negative emotions will never do anything.

Q. Into what kind of things can negative emotions be transformed?

A. It is better to say they must be conquered. But, if you like, we can say that they are transformed into some kind of emotion mixed with very much understanding – an emotion of higher parts of centres. Almost any negative emotion we have now can be transformed into an emotion of higher parts of centres. But this needs understanding, conviction that it is necessary, and decision to do it.

Q. Is it negative emotions that prevent us from getting into those emotional states?

A. Yes. We have enough money, but we spend it all on unpleasant things. If we save enough, we can use it in the right way. Power to use comes with quantity.

Q. I observe two kinds of indignation in myself one when for example I see a child hurt, and another when something annoys me myself. Are they both equally negative?

A. The more unselfish the indignation is, and the more right you are, the worse it is. The more energy you lose in it, the more negative results it will produce.

Q. Why am I so much sooner roused into negative emotions during discussions than at any other time? Political discussions, for instance.

A. Because you always think that things can be different. When you realize and become firmly convinced that things could not be different, you cease to argue. Arguing is based on the idea that things could be different and that some people could do things differently. Try to think from the point of view that all that happens happens because it cannot be different; if it could be different it would have happened differently. It is very simple, but very difficult to realize.

Q. If we see something we do not like in others is it because they are mirrors for ourselves and we have the same thing in us?

A. Chiefly, yes. But it is a great thing to realize that. Maybe people dislike others because they are mirrors of themselves. They do not realize it, but somehow feel it vaguely and it makes them dislike them. However, there is also a principle in the work that before becoming better one has to become worse. It is not only because one notices more – one actually does become worse before one acquires more control.

Q. If one always remembered about people that they could not act in any other way, could one then understand them?

A. Naturally you must remember that. And until this remembering is constant, you can understand nothing about them. There are many things like that. All you learn in the system must be in your consciousness at the same time, otherwise every small thing will make you forget everything.

Q. I find I become very negative when given advice and never agree with it.

A. Again it is all based on your attitude: you admit that someone else can affect your emotional state. We should not admit an emotional power like that over us. Now, even if you merely think about this advice you feel annoyed. You reconstruct it. But you should think in quite a different way; it is purely a matter of reasoning. Even if people give advice without thinking, even if you know better, there is no reason for you to lose your temper. You cannot get anything by being annoyed or irritated. You must stop justifying it in your mind.

When one stops this justifying, one very often finds that the cause of all these negative emotions is some wrong idea. Everybody can find something wrong in one or another side of his life and generally one tends to put the responsibility on this thing. One thinks that if this thing were right, everything else would be right. Everybody has one, sometimes two or more combinations of circumstances which one blames for everything wrong one does and for all one's manifestations of weakness. But one must understand that absolutely anything in the world can produce this result. Suppose there is some definite thing that is wrong and I think: 'If it were right, I would be different'. But if it were right, I would be just the same. I speak from experience, because I know people who thought so, and when the particular thing they found wrong was changed, they remained the same and merely found another unpleasant thing instead of the first one.

Q. I find that one of my greatest difficulties is irritation.

A. This is one of the deepest features in people and it affects the whole mass. The most difficult thing in the world is to bear patiently the unpleasant manifestations of other people. People can sacrifice everything else, but they cannot stand that. Irritation is a particular emotion produced by the feeling of mechanicalness of oneself or other people. It does not mean that every mechanical thing causes irritation, but sometimes mechanicalness produces it. If we do not feel the mechanicalness of other people in some particular instance, they may be even more mechanical, but there is no irritation. We are irritated by other people acting as machines, because we are machines ourselves. If we cease to be machines, we shall cease to be irritated. This feeling of mechanicalness becomes irritation because we identify with it. If

we manage to remove identification, the same thing that we know now as irritation becomes a very useful emotion, a kind of tentacle by which we can feel mechanicalness. You cannot imagine how different quite ordinary emotions become, and often how useful, if we do not identify with them.

Q. How can one best deal with negative emotion when it becomes simply apathy?

A. Very often when negative emotion takes the form of passive resistance you can do nothing at the moment. But you can continue to work. If you can do nothing to-day, there will be to-morrow, and the day after, and next week, and next month. You must prepare for the future, first of all by self-remembering, by remembering why you came, by remembering the first principles. All this apathy and negative feelings come from long sleep. If you continue to sleep when you could try to awake, this sleep will produce one or another negative state.

Q. I have observed in myself a constant desire to be comfortable. Is it general for everybody to feel this?

A. This is one of the most important features of our life. To this desire we sacrifice everything. We are ready to give up everything to go by the line of least resistance. Sometimes this desire becomes so strong that one can be comfortable and nothing else. Even if something is not comfortable, one tries to arrange it so that it should be comfortable.

Q. Is there a way of getting rid of it?

A. What to do is a different question; we must come to it from another side. This desire is a very big thing and every effort against it is important; so every effort must be discussed specially, not all efforts together. Sleep is the most comfortable thing; trying to awake is very uncomfortable. Later, when we partly awaken, we will feel how uncomfortable it is to sleep when anything may happen at any moment. But it is necessary to come to that state.

Q. How can one counteract laziness?

A. By effort. How otherwise? It is difficult to speak in general, because there are so many forms of laziness – so many different escapes. We must speak about concrete cases, so only you yourself can answer. Find in yourself different kinds of laziness, then you will see that it is not always the same – in some cases it manifests worse, in other cases less strongly. You need a large quantity of observations – nobody from outside can help you.

Q. Is it any good just wanting?

A. No, that is not sufficient. Suppose one is lazy in one particular thing, but not always equally lazy – sometimes more, sometimes less. This is material for observation. Find what makes you more lazy or less lazy, then you will find some causes and will know where to observe further. In many things in us we must find what makes a difference, because nothing in us remains the same for long. Even permanent features manifest themselves differently – one day in one way, another day in another way. It is necessary to find what causes it.

Q. Is there a means of telling the difference between a genuine need for rest and laziness?

A. As in many other things, there are cases when you can say definitely, and you must take only these cases and not think about doubtful ones. If you start with cases where you do not know, you can do nothing. In this system you must start with things about which you have no doubt.

Q. If you are trying to remember yourself, and you get some kind of result, can you be sure that it is not imagination?

A. Again the same answer applies. There will be moments about which you will have no doubt, and there will be moments about which you will know that they are imagination. You cannot be sure about every moment, but about some moments you will be sure.

Q. Can an outside circumstance suddenly wake you up?

A. Yes, but the next moment other outside circumstances come and make you fall asleep again, so there is no profit in it. And the more one kind of circumstances awakes you, the more easily others make you fall asleep. Only this awakening is sure which comes from

yourself.

Q. Would a man who is beginning to awake develop a sense of duality?

A. Is that an observation or not? If it is an observation it is one thing; but if it is just philosophy, it is quite useless. It will not help you if you decide in one way and things happen in another way. You must deal with to-day, and with a possible to-morrow.

Q. I have found that I can have a negative emotion and observe it at the same time.

A. Yes, certainly. You can have violent negative emotions and observe them. Very often negative emotions wake us up to a certain extent, so we can observe them. This is quite right, but it does not diminish them, they become even better if you do this and even more pleasing as a form of sleep. Observation is not the way to destroy negative emotions. If you want to destroy them, there are many methods, but observation is only for study.

Q. Is there any way of dealing with rather vague, dull, negative states?

A. Yes, many ways; sometimes you can struggle with it, but supposing even that your state is so dull that you can do nothing at the given moment, if you make efforts before it comes, while in a better state, that will help. You have to do only what is absolutely necessary at such a time, but you must not identify with your state and must only remember that it will pass, must not believe that it is permanent. Emotionally we always believe in things – the emotional centre does not know to-morrow; for it everything is the present, everything is permanent. You must not identify with this feeling, you must know that it will change.

Q. Everything that interested me in the work I very soon began to feel as a frightful grind. How am I to avoid this trap?

A. Well, it is a beautiful state for self-remembering – you can use it. The more negative you are, the better you can remember yourself – if you realize that you can get out. It must remind you, serve as an alarm, otherwise you will remain in a negative state all the time.

Q. It seems that only when I have observed some stupidity in myself am I able to make stronger efforts.

A. Sometimes it is very useful to see one's stupidity. If one could really see oneself, one would not be able to forget it. But this is connected with consciousness.

Q. I have always been rather adaptable, and that worries me. If I try to make an effort, it is very unpleasant to start with, but later it is no longer an effort.

A. The moment it becomes easy, it is a warning; it means that next time the effort will be more difficult.

Q. I find I can sometimes get out of a negative emotion by allowing myself to get identified with something pleasant.

A. You use the word 'identified' in a wrong sense. You cannot say 'I allow myself to get identified'; you can only say, 'I allow myself to get interested in something'. Yes, it may work for some time, but if you become identified, it will be just the same thing from a practical point of view. Only, in pleasant things you *can* be interested without being identified; in an unpleasant thing you *cannot* be interested without being identified.

Q. I find enjoyment a great difficulty. I enjoy almost everything, and this seems to send me to sleep.

A. Try to remember yourself, then enjoyment will be bigger, fuller and you will profit from it. But if it makes you fall asleep, you must try to avoid it, that is all. Every kind of emotional state can be used for selfremembering, but before you can do that it is necessary to create a capacity for it; and the capacity can be created only by constant, regular effort. If you just think about it once a week, nothing will come of it.

Q. I feel my chief obstacle is imagination, chiefly about myself. Is there any special work against this?

A. Imagination may be very different. If there are special ways, it is only possible to arrive at them through a detailed study. If you ask me in general, I can only answer – self-

remembering.

If you mean day-dreams, they are only half of our imaginings, and the most innocent half. Certainly they mean loss of time, but we waste time in so many ways that a little more or less does not make much difference. It is much more dangerous if you imagine certain qualities in yourself in other people, in humanity or in nature, and then come to believe in these imaginary ideas and put your faith in them. We are surrounded by these imaginary qualities, and it is with these that we must struggle.

Q. In trying to resist imagination, should one find the cause of it?

A. No, stop it at once. There are always causes. Replace it by something else – some intentional thinking.

Q. Why is it of no value to observe and study imagination as a means to self-knowledge?

A. You will very soon see that it does not give anything. Imagination always turns in the same circle. It is an uncontrolled mind activity, and by imagination we create many false values, keep to them and use them in our thinking. This is why imagination is dangerous. We do not verify things. We imagine things either because we like them, or sometimes because we dislike them and are afraid of them. We live in an imaginary world.

Q. By escaping from reality?

A. Not consciously escaping, but it happens like that. It is partly due to mental laziness: for instance, it is easier to imagine a thing than to study it.

Q. Wouldn't knowing that be an easy way of stopping it?

A. No, you can know it and it will still go on. A special effort is necessary to stop it. We are so mechanical that we can know and still do the same thing.

Q. I feel I cannot wait any longer to try and find a path out of the morass in which I now find myself. The more I see my mechanicalness, the more I see the urgency of so doing.

A. You must realize that a long time is necessary. Years and years have passed in ordinary life. When you hear about mechanicalness and are just beginning to struggle with it, you want results at once. It is necessary first to get accustomed to these ideas. There are no secrets or special methods to make it quicker.

Q. I find it difficult to realize that imagination enters into all our emotions.

A. Every emotion based on identification is imagination. Identification is a sign of imagination. When you find an emotion without identification, you will find an emotion without imagination.

Q. Is thought the only way to test imagination?

A. No, not thought but attention, because imagination is one of the manifestations that go without attention. The moment you turn your attention to it, imagination stops.

Q. Do you mean that one cannot observe imagination without stopping it?

A. You cannot observe it for long. If you just notice it and turn away, it can go on, but if you keep attention on it, it stops. Attention acts like a light, and imagination is like a chemical process that can only go on in the dark and stops with light.

Q. Does it not mean that when you notice it thought comes up?

A. Thought brings attention. Attention is a different faculty, because even thought can go on without attention. But thought can work *with* attention, while imagination cannot. Some faculties can work only with attention and some others can work without attention.

Q. What is the difference between ordinary thought and imagination?

A. Intentional or unintentional; controllable or uncontrollable.

Q. Imagination is one of the strongest things in man, yet it is the most useless. Why?

A. It is a bad habit, a form of sleep, a weakness. It is easy, it does not need any effort. All the rest needs effort.

Q. Is it possible to hope that we can get rid of imagination ultimately?

A. We cannot speak about ultimately, it is too far. The first step is to know how much time is

given to imagination; the next step is to give it a little less.

Q. I cannot say whether something is imagination or not and I do not know how to begin to recognize it.

A. Nobody can help you to begin, you must begin yourself. You must catch yourself in some kind of imagination – I do not mean exactly daydreaming. You must have some standard of imagination: then, when in doubt, you can compare. Imagination can take three forms; passive imagination, imagination expressing itself in talk, and imagination expressing itself in activity. There are lines and lines of our activity, each quite different from another. Some start with effort and go on with effort. Others may be imagination. One may think it is effort when in reality it is imagination expressing itself in activity which cannot stop and needs no effort. Talking is the same: some people must talk, others must do something, but both are manifestations of the same thing.

Q. I notice that imagining seems to take place in memory, going from one association to another. Is this a correct observation?

A. No. Memory by itself is not responsible for anything. Memory is impartial; it supplies material for whatever you want. You may want it for serious thinking, imagination, expression of negative emotions and so on.

Q. Is memory mechanical?

A. Memory itself is mechanical, but the use of memory, the application of memory, the functioning of memory can be more mechanical or less mechanical. Memory is inscriptions on the rolls of our centres. How to use them, how to find them, how to verify them – that is another thing.

Q. Should it matter much whether one knows the cause of any negative moods one observes: is it enough just to recognize that it is negative?

A. No. Sometimes it is very useful to know the cause, because when you want to fight with it, you cannot fight unless you know the cause, and the cause is generally in your own imagination. All the causes are in you, so it is necessary to know them.

Q. Sometimes when one is unhappy or perhaps feeling negative one is brought back to real issues. Since we have been told to guard against negative emotion, I cannot quite fit that in with the system.

A. You mix the idea of suffering and the idea of negative emotion. It is not the same. Suffering is very useful; you can get many things only through suffering. But when suffering is connected with identification and imagination, it becomes negative emotion.

Q. You say that man must give up suffering and also that he must suffer in order to develop. How can both things be true?

A. Different cases, different days, different moments. These are not two contradictory principles. There is much unnecessary suffering which one does not want to give up. Then there is some inevitable and necessary suffering which one must accept if one wants to get something. On the Fourth Way, not all at once, one has to sacrifice all unnecessary things; wrong theories, talk, imaginary suffering. Imaginary suffering is the chief obstacle.

Q. Then suffering does not exist?

A. Only a certain amount is real. But we increase it by imagination. Real suffering exists, but it is limited by many things, by time for instance. But nothing can stop or limit imaginary suffering. Real suffering, if it has a cause, may be necessary; it may give knowledge. Imaginary suffering takes away knowledge. Death of a friend, or grief of some kind is real suffering, but if you identify with it, it can produce negative emotion. And, after all, suffering occupies a very small part of our life, while negative emotions occupy the whole of it.

Q. Is pain a negative emotion?

A. Simply suffering pain is not a negative emotion, but when imagination and identification enter, it becomes a negative emotion. Emotional pain, like physical pain, is not a negative

emotion by itself, but when you begin to make all kinds of embroidery on it, it becomes negative.

Q. It has been stated, or at least implied, that man loves suffering. Is this strictly true?

A. You do not quite understand the meaning of that. If you think deeper, you will see that everybody has some kind of suffering, say self-pity. One never gives up this self-pity, it is the man's most cherished possession, he carries it with him, puts it in the best place, he will never try or ever decide in his mind to make an effort to get rid of this self-pity. Everybody has one or two negative emotions he is particularly attached to. He does not say to himself, 'I like, this negative emotion', but he lives in it, is fully absorbed in it, and everything is coloured by this negative emotion, so he will not sacrifice it. For many people, to sacrifice their chief negative emotion would mean sacrificing their whole life.

Q. Since man ceased to believe that his sufferings were a direct punishment from God, is he not ashamed of them and resentful of them?

A. Yes, it looks like that, but really he will never give them up. When he decides to give them up, he becomes free of them. It seems a simple thing, but when it comes to practice, he finds that he cannot do it, because his sufferings have already become a habit, and so, although he decides in his mind, he still continues to feel the same. Nevertheless, in order to get rid of unnecessary suffering, the first step is to decide to give it up in one's mind. When a man makes this decision, after some time he will give it up, but as long as his mind is hypnotized by this suffering, he will not make the effort.

Q. If he gives it up, what will he get in exchange?

A. He will get in exchange absence of suffering. That is why he does not want to give it up.

Q. What method can one use to sacrifice suffering?

A. Realization of values. But there are different kinds of suffering. Sometimes an effective way to destroy suffering is to see that it belongs to the imaginary part of oneself. Division into real and imaginary is very useful.

The general idea is that you cannot get anything for nothing, you have to sacrifice something. But what to sacrifice? One person does not want to sacrifice one thing, another person another thing. The answer is: sacrifice our suffering – negative emotions, negative imagination and all that. It is a very good sacrifice, only it is very difficult, because one is ready to sacrifice any pleasure, but not suffering.

Q. How can one do it? Does one refuse to think that one is suffering?

A. You refuse to accept your suffering, and stop your suffering. It is very simple. Suppose you have a grievance, either you are hurt or offended or something. Try to sacrifice this grievance and you will see how much you are attached to it. Actually it is a very pleasant feeling when one feels, 'I have nothing to worry about. Nobody is guilty.' But people dislike this, because they feel it as emptiness.

Q. I suppose the reward of any development is really suffering, for knowledge brings suffering?

A. I do not see that it is necessarily so. It is true that development means increase of suffering for a certain period, but you cannot regard this as an aim or the necessary result. By itself suffering can bring nothing, but if one remembers oneself in connection with it, it can be a great force. If suffering did not exist, it would be necessary to create it, because without it one cannot come to right self-remembering. But people try to run away from suffering, or try to disguise it, or they identify with it and in this way destroy the strongest weapon they have.

Q. What is useful suffering?

A. Until we get rid of useless suffering we cannot come to the useful. Most of our suffering is absolutely useless; we have too much of it. You must first learn to distinguish what is useless suffering. The first condition of getting free of it is to know it for what it is.

Q. Would you say suffering is to some extent essential for attaining change of being?

A. Certainly, but it depends on what you understand by suffering. We get nothing by pleasure; from that we can only get suffering. Every effort is suffering; every realization is suffering, because there are many unpleasant realizations about ourselves and about other things, and there are many forms of suffering. As I said, some sufferings are unnecessary and useless, with some other sufferings we must learn not to identify, and some sufferings are useful. We judge suffering from the point of view of whether it helps or hinders our work, so our attitude to suffering must be more complicated. Useless suffering is the greatest obstacle in our way; at the same time suffering is necessary, and sometimes it happens that people cannot work because they are afraid of suffering. In most cases what they are afraid of is imaginary suffering. We have much imagination and sometimes giving up certain kinds of imagination looks difficult.

Q. Is suffering, apart from physical pain, possible without false personality?

A. Certainly, but it does not become so insistent. When false personality begins to enjoy it, it becomes dangerous. Most of our suffering depends on identification, and if identification disappears, our suffering disappears too. One must be reasonable, one must realize that it is no use suffering if it is possible not to suffer.

Q. I do not understand how a positive emotion can be rooted in pain; yet some men of vision apparently attained the heights through physical suffering.

A. Through physical or mental suffering it is quite possible, by transformation. Every kind of suffering, theoretically speaking, can transform into positive emotion, but *only if it is* transformed. However, such definitions are dangerous, because next moment someone will understand it in the sense that it transforms *itself* into positive emotion. This would be quite wrong, because nothing transforms itself, it must be transformed by effort of will and by knowledge.

Q. Can grief help a man to a higher state of consciousness?

A. No single isolated shock can help, because there are many ties that keep us in our present state. It is important to understand that thousands of shocks are necessary, and for years. Only then can the threads be broken and man become free.

Q. How can real suffering exist if you say that the emotional centre has no negative part?

A. In the description of man in this system one comes up against the impossibility of describing things as they are: they can only be described approximately. It is the same as on small-scale maps where the relative size of things cannot be shown. In some cases, in the description of the human machine, the differences are so great that it is better to say that a thing does not exist at all than to say that one thing is big and another small. This refers to the emotional centre. There are emotions that are not negative, yet very painful, and there is a centre for them, but it occupies such an infinitesimal part compared with negative emotions that are not real that it is better to say that emotional centre has no negative part.

Q. How can you explain the great amount of suffering that exists in the world?

A. This is a very interesting question. From the point of view of the work it is possible to find at least a logical form of solution of this problem. In organic life man must be regarded as an experiment of the Great Laboratory. In this laboratory all possible kinds of experiments are made, and they have to be made by means of suffering to bring about some kind of fermentation. In some way suffering is necessary for this; all the cells of this experiment have to suffer, and because of that their tendency is to avoid suffering, to have as little of it as possible, or to run away. If some of these cells break this tendency and accept suffering voluntarily, they can rid themselves of it and become free. Suffering, voluntary suffering, can become school-work. Nothing is more difficult and at the same time nothing can create so much force as voluntary suffering. The idea of development is to create an inner force, and how can a man put himself to the test without suffering? From one point of view the whole of organic life exists for planetary purposes. From another point of view it exists only for the sake of those who escape. So it does not exist for feeding the moon alone. This suffering is

the highest product and the rest are merely by-products; the highest is always the most important.

We are far from understanding the idea of suffering, but if we realize that small things can be attained with small suffering, and big ones with big suffering, we shall understand that it will always be proportionate. But we must remember one thing – we have no right to invent suffering. Also, one has the right to accept suffering for oneself, but one has no right to accept it for other people. According to one's views of life, one helps other people, only it must be understood that helping cannot diminish suffering, it cannot change the order of things.

Q. Should not one work for the relief of suffering?

A. As much as one can, but there is suffering which can be relieved and suffering which cannot be relieved because it depends on bigger causes. Sleeping people have to suffer; maybe there is a great cosmic purpose in this suffering, because only suffering can eventually wake them up. If they can arrange their life so as to be happy and contented in sleep, they will never awake. But all this is only talk, because anyway it cannot be changed.

Q. Is there a definite amount of suffering to be borne in the world?

A. Probably for the purposes of possible evolution everyone must be surrounded by enormous possibilities of suffering. Evolution depends on man's attitude; if he accepts suffering and tries not to identify with it. It may be that this whole law was created so that he could become stronger, because strength can only be created by suffering.

Q. Is it good for one person to suffer for another?

A. No one can suffer for another; if I have a toothache, it will not diminish mine if you have a toothache too.

Q. You say that man is an experiment?

A. Man is specially made for evolution – he is a special experiment made for self-development. *Every* man is an experiment, not *all* men.

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Now we have to return to practical things and the study of personal work. It is necessary to understand responsibility in personal work, because when a man begins to understand something, to formulate certain wishes in connection with the work, his responsibility towards himself increases. The more one understands, the greater one's responsibility, because if one knows nothing and does not attempt to work, one cannot make a serious mistake. But when one begins to work one can sin against the work, so to speak; and when a man makes mistakes it can stop his personal work. So his responsibility begins as soon as he begins to work, and it must be understood that this responsibility is very great, because everything counts: everything one says or does, everything one does not say or do, *everything* is counted and is put for or against one. It is not an arbitrary action: it is so in the very nature of things. Things themselves make it so.

In order to do something, to reach something it is necessary to work on many lines at the same time, otherwise one sticks. If you miss one or two lines, you have to go back and start again from the beginning; you cannot choose which lines to work on. Suppose you have to work on fifty lines and you discard three lines you do not like and work on forty-seven. Then, sooner or later, you have to go back and begin again from the beginning on all the fifty lines, because after some time forty-seven lines cannot take you any further. I mean by those lines trying to remember yourself, trying not to identify, not to express negative emotions and so on. Suppose you accept all those lines and leave out only one, about talking – it will spoil everything. Or if you accept them all, and the next moment forget – you will again get nowhere. That is why we cannot get right results. We start well and then the next moment forget and say to ourselves: 'I cannot keep fifty things in my mind at once'.

Q. How can one increase one's sense of responsibility?

A. It must be based on valuation. If you value something, then you have a sense of responsibility.

Q. You said that another of our chief difficulties is formatory thinking. I do not in the least know how to think not formatorily.

A. Think to the best of your ability and compare results – when your thinking gives results and when it does not. In that way you will come to a better understanding, at any rate better than just wondering about it. Definitions will not help you: desire for definitions is only an excuse. If you find yourself in a very difficult position, you will think to the best of your ability how to get out of it. Think in the same way.

Q. Before we can think differently, is it necessary to perceive things differently?

A. We cannot perceive differently until we think differently. We have control only of our thoughts; we have no control over perception. Perception depends particularly on the state of consciousness. If one awakes for sufficiently long, one can perceive many things one does not perceive now. It does not depend on desire or decision.

Q. Is all thinking formatory, except when we are trying to self-remember?

A. No, not all, but a great deal of our thinking is formatory. But when we think about serious things, such as the ideas of this system, we either cannot think at all or our thinking is notformatory. Formatory thinking is always poor, but for some problems it is ridiculous.

Q. You said once that thinking about the big ideas of the system can be a way of stopping identification. I cannot see why this is so and why identification should necessarily spoil thinking?

A. Because identification makes thought narrow and defective, it binds you, you cannot think, you cannot make deductions. It lowers the standard of man's normal intellectual capacity. As to why thinking about the big ideas of the system stops identification, it is because you cannot think about them if you identify with them. Your thinking will produce no effect. When we are studying, trying to understand, this means a new way of thinking. The moment we go back to the old way of thinking, we identify.

Q. You said formatory thinking always concerns itself with opposites; but how can we know anything other than by opposites?

A. Not always – I said it is one of the characteristics of formatory thinking. And when we think, we must think about the subject itself, not about its opposite.

Q. But if I am to know about some particular thing, I must know what it is not.

A. Not at all. You can know what one or another thing is without making a catalogue of what it is not. It is quite a wrong self-accusation to say that you have to use such a clumsy method of thinking, because in that way you would have to think for two years about every small thing. You can think about things without opposites – just about what they are. Formatory thinking is not *thinking*. Never forget that formatory thinking can serve many useful purposes, but it is not for *thinking*.

Q. People No. 1 live all their lives with formatory apparatus. Does that mean they have no growth of being at all from the beginning of their lives?

A. Not only men No. 1 but also No. 2 and No. 3 can live only with formatory apparatus. The great majority of people use nothing else. Certainly they have a certain growth of being; only it is, so to speak, not individual, it is mass growth, in the sense of a child and a grown up man. But their being does not grow beyond a certain level, and we are interested in growth of being towards man No. 4.

To grow up in the ordinary way is natural; but this does not change the level of being. And even this natural growth of being can be arrested.

Q. I have noticed that if I ask a question, while it is being answered, my mind is working and, as a result, I am not listening. What is this due to?

A. Quite right. This is simply associative thinking, mechanical thinking. Naturally, if you ask

a question and want to know the answer you must stop associations and take in what is said, and only then think about it and compare. If you do not stop associations, the answer comes to you mixed with your own thoughts, not exactly what was said. So you never get the right answer. Struggle with associative thinking is a definite line of work. If you study something, listen to something or are trying to understand something, you have to do it with a free mind. If you go on with your own thoughts at the same time, your mind will never be free to follow.

Q. Why is one inclined to ask 'why' rather than 'how'?

A. Because it is easier, more mechanical, we are more accustomed to it. To ask 'how' needs thinking; you have to formulate your question in the right way. And 'why' can be asked without thinking.

Q. It was said that one of the methods of struggling with negative emotions is thinking differently. I do not quite understand what thinking differently means.

A. It means to take some subject which produces emotion and think about it, trying not to justify yourself or to accuse other people. That will be different thinking. Although there are negative emotions that cannot be destroyed in this way, for they need stronger methods, this method must be tried first in every case.

Q. I find that most of the time trivial thoughts occupy my mind. Would it be a good plan to study some difficult language, Russian for example, about which one could think while doing purely mechanical work?

A. For what purpose? After some time you will have wrong thoughts in Russian!

Q. Is there any way in which we can remember more clearly what we have understood when we were in a better state?

A. It is a very important thing, but I do not know of any special method. These moments must be connected. Look backwards, try to compare. This is particularly important in relation to some definite question. For instance, you may understand something you had not understood half an hour ago; but perhaps in the past there have been moments when you also understood something in this connection. Try to remember these moments and connect them.

Q. Does understanding of an idea or a term vary in relation to the degree of being?

A. Certainly. People understand according to their level, their capacity – not according to the meaning of things.

Q. My difficulty is that no idea is completely clear to me.

A. It is impossible to make it clear with formatory thinking and words. People think they understand a thing when they give it a name, but they do not realize that this is artificial. When you can *feel* a thing and when you can verify it by higher consciousness and higher mind, then only can you say that it is really true and that it really exists. And schools do not deal with ordinary intellectual ideas. This means that these ideas, as for instance, the idea of self-remembering, are not clear without higher centres, for without higher centres one cannot come to the truth. Schools are the work of higher centres; they give us something which we cannot attain by ourselves, because we can only use the ordinary mind. And the ordinary mind has definite limits and cannot jump over them. It can accumulate material, forget it, accumulate again and forget again, and reduce the system to just nonsense by going too straight in one direction.

When you find yourself in a state approaching higher emotional centre, you will be astounded how much you can understand at once – and then you come back to your normal state and you forget it all. By persistent self-remembering and by certain other methods you may come to the higher emotional centre, but you will not be able to retain what you have understood then. If you write it down, it will have no sense when you read it with the intellectual centre later.

Q. Sometimes when I have tried to self-remember I have a strange feeling about inanimate objects, as if they had a sort of awareness that was them.

A. Discount the possibility of imagination. Let us say simply that you feel something new in things. But when you begin to explain it, you begin to imagine. Do not try to explain, just leave it. Sometimes you can feel strange things in that way, but explanations are always wrong, because you feel with one very good apparatus and explain with another, a very clumsy machine that cannot really explain.

Q. It all seems to come back to the same question – how to be more emotional.

A. You cannot try to be emotional – the more you try, the less emotional you will be. You can try to be conscious, and if you become more conscious, you will become more emotional. You must think about how to get more energy to be conscious. That would be a right question, and the answer would be that first you must stop leaks and try to get more energy by following all the indications you get from the work – *all* of them. Do not only concentrate on one; you can always find something that you did not do.

Q. Sometimes I feel that I have the capacity to concentrate, but I do not know what to do. I only think about small things and it disappears again.

A. You have always more than enough material for work on yourself; you can never be at a loss as to what to do. Try to stop thoughts – that is easy and useful. If you have no energy to do that, you must accumulate energy by struggle with mechanical habits and things like that. That will accumulate enough energy for this effort to remember yourself or the effort to stop thoughts.

Q. Is meditation, as advocated in Indian books, the same as self-remembering?

A. They speak of meditation but they also say that one must work under a teacher. We read and remember one thing and forget another; we think we can study meditation or meditate ourselves. If you can remember yourself, you can meditate; if not, you cannot. Self-remembering means control of thoughts, a different state. Meditation is an action of a developed mind, and we ascribe it to ourselves. It would be very good if we could meditate, but we cannot; self-remembering is the way to it. You cannot begin from the end; you have to begin from the beginning like in everything else. What does ‘meditation’ mean *for us*? Thinking about the system; trying to connect ideas and reconstruct the system. This is ‘meditation’, not simply thinking about one word or one idea.

Q. In trying to think about some definite idea of the system I always think the same thing I thought before. I cannot help it.

A. This is a technical side. You must try different ways. You can either concentrate on one or another side of the subject, or take one or another point of view, or try to explain to someone else. If it is difficult to think on some definite subject, you can always imagine that you are explaining this subject to some person. But again, you must imagine yourself explaining it to different people – people with preparation or without preparation, a religious person, a scientifically minded person and so on. You have to explain differently according to who you are explaining to. Then it is always very useful to separate what you knew before from what you have learnt from the system. This is very important. If you do not separate, you will always mix things in your thinking. It is necessary to know what you knew before, what you read somewhere and what you got here.

There is yet another thing you can do – you can try to write a programme of thinking for yourself. Find your own subjects you would like to think about, or subjects which you think may be useful to you, or subjects which you do not understand but would like to learn to think about. All this is useful. Then, if you have time, think about them two or three times a day.

Q. I have tried these imaginary conversations you suggested, but have not been able to make them last long enough.

A. These imaginary conversations must go according to plan; you cannot start them just from any point. You can invent some sort of situation and make yourself speak to some imaginary person, or to someone you know, and explain some particular subject to him according to the

kind of person he is. This may help. But do not try to give a lecture – a lecture is bound to turn formatory.

Q. My difficulty is talking within my mind. Will these imaginary conversations help me to work against this habit?

A. Yes, that may be useful, or you can think about the ideas of the system, set yourself definite tasks. Another approach is to see whether this mental talking is useful or useless. It may be useful, but mostly it is useless. Like all mechanical habits it is very difficult to struggle with. You do not notice it, or you may have been talking to yourself for two hours before you notice, so you must have a better watchman to ring the bell when you begin. This means being more awake.

Q. I feel one might achieve something if one could remember more of the system at one moment instead of just fragments.

A. Quite right. That is why you will see after some time that it is useful to work with new people and explain things to them, because you cannot have a sufficiently large part of the system before your eyes if you do not repeat it all, and you can only do this when you have to explain things to new people and answer their questions. It is not necessary to give lectures or have large groups; something useful can be done with one, two or three people.

Q. Lately I have been more dissatisfied than usual with myself and the lack of results obtained from my efforts. What is to be done?

A. You must not let yourself identify with these negative feelings and disappointments; it is the worst possible thing. Think about something cheerful. For instance, you can take any subject in the system and compare how you thought before about it and how you think now. You will see that you have gained one thing, and another thing, and a third thing. That will help you to struggle on.

Q. In the example of the eye of a needle in the Gospels does it mean that when identification ceases a person has a chance?

A. It may be simply wrong valuation; or it may be too many words, a great load of words, so that a man cannot pass through.

Q. In our present state, can we know real love, loyalty or devotion?

A. For us, these things are relative. We can have them more or less. But we cannot know them in any absolute way.

Q. I find it difficult to understand that faith has no place in this system. Surely it is necessary to believe that the system has possibilities of making you more conscious?

A. That will not help – quite the reverse. You must try to verify it, and base your attitude on facts, not on belief. If you do even one-tenth of what is suggested, very soon you will have facts, and then you must base your attitude on these facts, not on theories. Faith is a passive thing. We have to verify everything, accept nothing on faith. For faith there are other ways, but in the Fourth Way faith would be weakness – trying to escape work. Instead of trying to know, we would believe. Only what man himself finds to be true can serve as a sufficient foundation.

We must understand that faith, in the true sense, is a certain state that is more than emotional. It is a positive emotion and, taken in this sense, it means a higher level which we, being men 1, 2 and 3, have not reached, and so we do not know what faith means – it is only a word for us. Faith must be directed to big things, not applied to small things of ordinary life. When people use what we call ‘faith’ in cases when they must *know* – it is just laziness.

There can be one faith and another faith – it can be on different levels. According to the division of men into seven categories there can be seven kinds of faith, so it is difficult to speak in these terms.

Q. Why should I want to make myself different if I do not believe there is a reason?

A. Not believe, but *know*. If you merely believe, you will do nothing. If you find out your

state, you will try to get out. But this will be based on facts, on observations, not on belief.

Q. What centre is used for faith?

A. Real faith is a higher emotion, belonging to the higher emotional centre. In our ordinary emotional centre there can only be imitation faith. Real faith means not only emotion, but also knowledge.

Q. I had an idea that work on oneself was work towards salvation, towards immortality.

A. Big words. But if you said it is towards not making fools of ourselves, I would understand you. We constantly make fools of ourselves because we are asleep.

Q. Isn't there a part of ourselves which survives bodily death?

A. This is a very interesting and very important point. You ask so simply about after death, as though one could know about it. All experience of all mankind (I do not mean imagination) shows; that we cannot know what happens after death, otherwise we would have known something positive about it. Since we know nothing, it proves definitely that in this state of consciousness, with ordinary centres, we cannot get at the truth, we can only make theories. First try to understand that our capacity of cognition, our capacity of knowing, is limited by our state of consciousness. In this state of consciousness we can only know certain things and have answers only to certain questions. If we want to know more, we find that we cannot; in practically every line of study we come sooner or later to a dead wall. In some cases this wall remains in exactly the same place, as in the case of life after death – we know no more about it than man of the Stone Age. We can only think that if we acquire a higher state of consciousness and use higher centres we may get a concrete answer to that question. We can know our life only from birth to death. If we want to know what was before and what will be after – if there is a before and after in relation to that – we can only hope that in a better state of consciousness, using an improved machine, we will be able to understand. We ask ourselves these questions and we do not realize that we cannot have an answer such as we are. There are many questions like that.

It is necessary to realize and remember how many are the things we come up against in our thinking which are really insoluble for our mind. When we realize that, it will help us to see that we must begin with possible problems. Many people, I do not mean necessarily in the work, but even in the work, many people spend all their mental energy on these insoluble problems. They invent all kinds of solutions, try to think in this or that way about them, but it is all quite useless. You can understand one thing if you understand another thing, and a third thing if you have understood the first two. There are ways for everything, but some problems we can approach with the ordinary mind, while other problems we must put off and wait till we are more conscious and are able to use better machines for thinking.

In ordinary thinking, in ordinary philosophy and psychology, this question never arises, or if it does, it arises in so vague and confused a form that it does not help. But we know more divisions, more steps, and we must use this knowledge. It will help us to think more practically and to avoid useless abstractions and trying to solve problems which at present we cannot solve.

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