

CHAPTER XV

Idea of esotericism – The logical method and the psychological method of thinking – Explanation of the psychological method – What the idea of esotericism implies – Certain kinds of esoteric ideas become accessible only at difficult periods – Necessity of being united – Materiality of knowledge – Great knowledge and how it differs from ordinary knowledge – Accumulators of knowledge – Schools – Can one affect external events? – Study of life – Big events of life and their influence – Subjective ways and objective way – Attitudes as a means of changing influences – Assessing events in life – Gradual disappearance of B influences – The reason for the decrease of influence of esoteric circles – Lack of preparation – The system and how it is taught – Different scales – Death of schools, and conditions necessary for their existence – Relation of the system to Christianity – To die and to be born – Prayer – Suggestions concerning the study of the Lord's Prayer.

I HAVE GIVEN YOU A GENERAL IDEA of the fundamental principles of the system and up to now the centre of gravity of our work – at least of practical work – was in ourselves. Today I want to show you a larger view.

It is necessary to understand the idea of esotericism and to realize why certain people can understand this idea while other people cannot. We must know what esotericism means, what is included in it, what is excluded by it, what is connected with it, and what can serve as a kind of test or touch-stone for recognizing people who can understand it.

For some people the idea of esotericism appears absurd, impossible. For them esotericism not only does not seem valuable but does not even appear as possible truth. But for others the idea of esotericism is necessary and important. The cause of this is to be found in the difference of method. All ways of thinking can be divided into two categories: logical thinking and psychological thinking, and the capacity or incapacity to use the psychological method of thinking makes an enormous difference. The logical method is better than no method, but it is very limited. It is useful in lawcourts, but for understanding it is not sufficient. For logical thinking esotericism is impossible, because it cannot be demonstrated or formulated, but for psychological thinking, which sees the psychological nature of things, the idea of esotericism follows from many facts we can observe. So the psychological method may bring one to the idea of esotericism and may lead to proofs of its existence – certainly subjective proofs, but still proofs. And this in its turn may bring a man to the realization of the necessity of systems or teachings of an esoteric origin. It gives him the possibility of understanding the ideas of such systems and leads to the realization of the necessity of three lines of work and to an understanding of them.

First we must try to understand the difference between the logical and the psychological methods, and to establish what each of them is.

The psychological method cannot be defined; but we can find examples of its application, of its working. We can see how the psychological method opens new ways of thinking, how by using it we begin to understand many things.

When, by means of the psychological method, we have made a general survey of the teachings which prove to have an esoteric origin, we shall more or less know the qualities of teachings which can be called esoteric and shall be able to think in a right way about this system and apply its principles in practice.

The psychological method starts with two admissions. The first is that things have their inner meaning. The second is that things are connected; that they only appear to be separated. Things depend on one another; they stand in a certain relation to one another, whereas the logical method takes each thing separately. So, the psychological method studies everything first from the point of view of its inner meaning and, secondly, it finds similarities in the

dissimilar. The basis of this method, and the chief difference from ordinary methods, is the realization of the relativity of mind – the understanding of the type and kind of mind used and realization that in one state of mind things can be understood in one way and in another in another way. For the logical mind everything is certain and unique. But the psychological method shows that every thing, every conclusion, every deduction is a mental picture and is merely the result of the working of our mind. For distinguishing, comparing and finding the relative values of things and seeing which is higher and which lower, you can start only with this realization of the possibility of different minds. When you compare ideas, let us say certain ideas of the New Testament, of the Upanishads, or some attributed to Pythagoras or Plato with scientific ideas or philosophy, sometimes you can experience this realization of minds on different levels.

What I want you to understand is that, even using ordinary knowledge, you can come to the relative value of ideas and see that the starting-point is the realization that our ordinary mind *is not the only one that exists*.

See if you can find some examples of the psychological method; if you cannot do so now, you must try to find, later, examples of cases when you had new possibilities of understanding.

Q. Do you mean that one is not guided by the external similarity of facts?

A. This is one aspect. If you meet with it, you will know what is psychological method and what is not.

Q. Is the psychological method the use of the intellectual part of the intellectual centre?

A. No, not quite. The more centres and the more parts of centres you use, the better the psychological method. It means using all the powers you have. Logical method means the use of only the mechanical part of intellectual centre.

Q. And is the esoteric method the use of higher centres?

A. No, it is the use of the system. You cannot use higher centres, but you can use the system.

Q. Is psychological thinking only possible when all our functions are working rightly?

A. We must start as we are. We cannot wait till we change, because if we do we will never change; and if we change mechanically, we change only for the worse.

Q. What are the first things to learn in trying to think psychologically? I feel it is more than I can accomplish.

A. When you say it is more than you can accomplish you think about the completed process. And I speak about the process itself, about beginning to work. If you say this is beyond you, you can do nothing and so, naturally, nothing happens. It is again this habit of thinking in absolutes.

Q. What are the essential features of esotericism?

A. It is difficult to speak about essential features, because it depends on how you take this word. The word 'esoteric' means inner. Esotericism includes in itself the idea of the existence of an inner circle of humanity. You remember how humanity was described as consisting of four circles – esoteric, mesoteric and exoteric, which constitute the inner circle, and the outer circle in which we live. The idea of esotericism implies transmission of knowledge; it presumes the existence of a group of people to whom a certain knowledge belongs. This must not be understood in some mystical way, but more definitely, concretely. There are a great many differences between the inner and the outer circles. For instance, many things we want to find or create can exist only in the inner circle, such things as positive emotions, understanding between people, certain kinds of knowledge; all this belongs to the inner circle. I think this is sufficient for understanding the idea of the inner or esoteric circle.

Q. I understand that the primary feature of esoteric knowledge is that it is hidden and one would not be likely to find it. So how can we recognize esoteric knowledge or an esoteric school?

A. We are studying a system which is supposed to be esoteric, so with its help we will be able to recognize it. And although esoteric knowledge is hidden from ordinary life, it can be found. It is not hidden absolutely, so that nobody can find it, otherwise it would have no meaning. This would be contrary to its aims and would spoil the results of its existence. The only meaning of hidden knowledge is that it can be found; the important thing is how to recognize it. With the help of these ideas, comparing what can be found in the ordinary intellectual way and what cannot and then comparing it with the system, we shall be able to establish with a certain degree of probability the level of the knowledge we meet with.

If we take history in the ordinary way as a series of separate events, we shall not find proofs of esotericism. One thing will follow another, on the surface and without apparent connection. But if we know that things are connected, and look for connections, we shall find them hidden beneath the surface. For instance, many big historical changes came apparently from nothing, with no antecedents, no origin. In ancient Greece there is nothing on the surface to explain the seventh century B.C. In the eighth and ninth centuries there was apparently nothing leading up to it; there was no direct line of development.

In the same way Gothic art seemingly came out of nothing. It had no history, it appeared instantly.

In prehistoric art too, that is, in all that belongs to more than ten thousand years ago, there is nothing on the surface to explain the big Sphinx, for instance. It is both bigger in concept and higher in level, and, so to speak, more clever (though this is not the right word) than anything we know. Who made it? Why are such works of art found in the desert?

Then again, take literature, especially that of the East. We can find such things as the great Indian poems and the New Testament which are of a higher level than anything else we know. There is nothing similar to them, nothing ordinary can explain them – all these things are absolutely unique. If they are taken separately and presupposing that they have no inner meaning, they cannot be explained. But if we try to use the psychological method we shall find the connection.

Try to think about esotericism, how it is possible, in which form it can exist, in which form it cannot exist. You can read of secret societies in the East, or in Tibet, of the existence of secret libraries, of groups of people living in hidden places and preserving ancient knowledge. This is a crude form of thinking. There is nothing impossible in the idea that there are groups of people of this kind. But the idea of esotericism is more subtle. It does not require secret societies. The idea of secret societies is a simplified form of thinking. It is quite possible that there are people here on the earth who possess much greater knowledge than we do, but if they have this knowledge, they have no need of secret societies. They need not live in the mountains; they can live anywhere.

Q. Is it necessary to know an esoteric doctrine to recognize the presence of esoteric ideas?

A. No, you can recognize esoteric ideas by means of the psychological method. Only with the psychological method can you find more in the system which you know.

Q. What must one know to use the psychological method?

A. The psychological method requires no special knowledge. What is necessary is simple thinking, but not the narrow ordinary thinking. Logical thinking is narrow, but psychological thinking is broader thinking, comparing not two things but maybe as many as five. Logical thinking always deals with two: one must be true, another false. For the psychological method it is not necessarily so; both may be wrong, or both may be right.

I will give you an example of the psychological method.

In 1915 I gave in St Petersburg a public lecture on Life after Death. I tried to bring together all the existing ideas about life after death: the positivist, scientific idea of death as disappearance, the religious understanding of death connected with the idea of an immortal soul, heaven as reward and hell as punishment; the spiritualistic understanding of the idea of

survival; the theosophical idea of reincarnation, the Buddhist idea of recurrence; and many others. What is interesting is that they are all right; they only look contradictory. Logically they contradict one another, but from the point of view of the psychological method they complement one another.

In order to illustrate this I asked the question: how can all these ideas be right since they look so different? It is because there is a law we do not understand. The human mind cannot invent anything absolutely wrong. The normal mind, working freely and not tied to some pre-supposed truth, always arrives at some kind of truth. A complete lie can be invented only by an insane mind or a mind working in chains.

Q. Should one know other esoteric teachings and find connections?

A. Only in a general way, to find the place of this system. You do not know enough to compare and find connections. When you think about this system and read something that reminds you of it, you take only one or another idea; you do not compare all ideas. Parts can always be analogous, but such comparing can be useful only when you can see the whole behind the parts – and then you may find that the two have nothing in common, because in order to be similar everything must be similar. Suppose one point in one system is similar to one point in another, but these points are surrounded by fifteen other points that have no similarity, this makes them essentially different. We cannot do it yet; we are not accustomed to finding the relation of a part to the whole in ordinary thinking. We think that parts can be compared and that parts can be right or wrong without relation to the whole.

Q. But if you find two systems of philosophy that have points or peaks which resemble one another?

A. How do you know they resemble one another? You only know words; you do not know what is behind these words. Words do not guarantee the meaning. This is why it is recommended for a long time not to try to find parallels and to study this system separately from anything else. Later, when you know more, you may try to find parallels.

Q. What guarantee is there that there are no new ideas in this system brought in since its origin?

A. This is very clear. If the principles are kept, they eliminate wrong ideas. Formatory ideas cannot exist side by side with esoteric ideas.

Q. What arrangements can be made to ensure that the ideas can be kept pure?

A. Ideas become distorted when people begin to invent their own explanations and theorize; but so long as they work sincerely and try to verify everything that comes into their minds and work according to the principles and rules, distortion is not at all necessary. In the organization of school-work every measure is taken against distortion, and if it happens it is only because people forget these precautionary measures. Distortion is generally the influence of formatory centre, for when people begin to work with formatory centre and nobody corrects them, there is no idea in the world that cannot be distorted in twenty-four hours.

Q. If that is the scale of distortion you mean, I certainly distort the ideas for myself.

A. For yourself it does not matter – you have a chance to correct it. Everybody distorts them in the beginning until they have the whole range of ideas, but understanding one part corrects one's understanding of another. You cannot understand the whole thing and misunderstand the parts, and if you can think rightly of the whole, you will understand every part. Besides, your questions show whether you think rightly, and if you think wrongly, it is corrected.

Q. Different people want different things. How should we understand the meaning of school-work?

A. School-work has many different parts, all of them to help you to awake. Every individual must have his own aim. If the aims of individuals fit in with the aims of the school, they work in the school. If they do not fit in, they leave.

You may start with the idea of acquiring knowledge. If you find new ideas, you will begin to value them. The word 'work' is often used without discrimination.

Q. But you use it yourself!

A. I mean it. I want to show you that the only way for you is to understand the psychological method, the idea of esotericism, the proofs of its existence and to have a certain understanding of the system. After that you can start to work. The system is a living thing, an organic thing that grows and opens up new horizons.

You see, we live in a very peculiar time and the work is very important, in that, apart from other points, it gives the possibility to remain sane – or to become sane. The further we go, the more we talk about these ideas, the more we are apt to lose sight of the meaning of the whole thing. We take for granted that we have these ideas, we talk about them, we want to get something from this teaching, but we do not think about why we are able to have these ideas and speak about them.

The teaching itself, certain kinds of teachings, certain kinds of ideas become accessible to people only at certain moments, at very difficult periods. These are not the ordinary kind of ideas that you can get at any time and any moment. Quite the opposite, the very fact that we can have these ideas shows that it is an extremely difficult time. It would have been much easier to work with these ideas, say, thirty or forty years ago, but in reality one thing depends on another, for if times were not so difficult we would not have had them.

So if we keep this in mind, even this realization alone will by itself bring us to the right attitude, it will always remind us that we have to take these ideas seriously, that nothing in relation to them can be taken from the point of view of ordinary likes and dislikes or ordinary attitudes of right and wrong. In present times it is impossible to foretell what the future may bring, so we must have a particular appreciation and a particular regard for these ideas and this system and try to do not only what is right at a given moment, personally, individually, but what is right in connection with the whole thing; not merely think of personal aim but of the whole tradition connected with this work.

And certainly, first of all, unity is necessary, because it is possible to satisfy the needs of the work itself only so long as we are all ready to go the same way. If there are different opinions and one thinks it best to go to the right and another to the left, nobody will do anything right, for there will be no direction. If one person thinks one thing and another person another thing, both will be wrong; it is not that one will be right and another wrong. Actions must be connected, they must agree with one another. There cannot be a rule that everyone must agree with and understand everything in his own mind, but there can be no difference in actions.

Circumstances are not in our hands, they may change, may take one or another turn. But the whole principle of imitating school-work is that there cannot be differences of opinion as regards actions, because otherwise how can we work? I only wish to show you that in dealing with the principles of the system and organization of the work we must never forget that we are dealing with a very big thing, and we have against us very big things. If we keep this in mind we will find the right way. If we forget this, nothing will come of it.

Q. What do you mean by imitating school-work?

A. I used this word not in the sense of imitating external methods but in the sense of inner imitation which can be done only on the basis of a certain organization.

People in the work must be united. The more we are united, the more resistance we will show to all kinds of unfavourable influences and the more we can get out of them, because we will be, as it were, in the middle of a big accumulator full of all kinds of energies. If we are closed, we will be able to get energy out of this big accumulator; if we are full of holes, we will be unable to keep any of it.

You see, I must explain to you one idea. Everything in the world is material and limited, only materiality is different. There is a limited amount of sand in the desert and of water in the sea. Knowledge is also material and therefore limited. It is very useful to remember that the knowledge necessary for change of being exists only in a very limited quantity. Knowledge is substance. For a certain definite period – say a hundred years – humanity has a certain amount of knowledge which can be used. If too many people want this knowledge, they will have so little that nothing can be done with it. But since very few want it, those who want it can get it.

Q. I do not understand this about knowledge. Is not knowledge consciousness?
A. No, consciousness is another thing, although this is true in the sense that a higher degree of consciousness in itself includes knowledge. It does not include all knowledge, but the knowledge you already possess. In a state of consciousness you know at once all that you know; in this sense you can say that consciousness is knowledge, but by itself consciousness cannot give more knowledge, although one can look at this question from different sides.

As to the idea of great knowledge, higher or esoteric knowledge, we must first of all understand that all our ordinary knowledge, including scientific knowledge, is always knowledge acquired with ordinary mind. All methods of scientific investigation are the work of ordinary mind, but there is another knowledge which is acquired by a higher or a more developed mind, and this knowledge will differ from ordinary knowledge, because knowledge acquired with ordinary mind is always limited by methods of investigation, by eye and ear, for, after all, the most complicated instruments that can be used in scientific research have to be verified by eye and ear. This knowledge is a very narrow knowledge not based on understanding of the whole, whereas great knowledge is knowledge based on understanding of the whole by a more developed mind. Thus there are different degrees of knowledge which are so different that they cannot really be compared. If you learn the multiplication table, this kind of knowledge not being limited in amount, you do not take it away from anybody. Nor, in the case of esoteric knowledge, do you in fact take it away from others, but this is because there are very few people who want it.

It is difficult, at first, to accept the idea that knowledge is material, but if you think about it, perhaps you will begin to realize it. Let us take it like this: knowledge can exist in different solutions, in a very weak solution or in stronger solutions. When I speak of knowledge I speak of a stronger solution which is very limited. We think that if we do not know something, it is because we do not know where to learn it. We do not realize how many things there are that we cannot know. Because of this it is difficult for us to understand the materiality of knowledge and what controls its distribution. Just as there are accumulators in the body, so there are accumulators of knowledge in life. At certain periods of history certain knowledge was collected and kept there. If you find such an accumulator, you will get the knowledge. What are these accumulators? They are schools, even the old schools that no longer exist. Man cannot develop without tapping these accumulators, but if he does, he can get energy from them, real energy, such as centres get. Man 1, 2 and 3 will get only coarse energy, the energy that man No. 5 can get will be finer. When it is said that knowledge is limited, it refers to knowledge in these accumulators.

Q. Has this knowledge got form and weight?

A. Form – not necessarily, but weight – yes, not in the ordinary sense but in the sense of density. In ordinary language too some words have weight while some have no weight at all.

Q. How can we work to find this accumulator? Does it refer only to schools, or is it also something within ourselves?

A. You can work to come into contact with it just by learning what you can learn. It refers to both, to oneself and to schools.

Q. Does a man with greater knowledge have a responsibility towards those who have less? I mean a man who has esoteric knowledge?

A. Esoteric knowledge means school, so a man who has esoteric knowledge is a man who comes from a school or who is in a school. His responsibility is towards the school. When a man acquires school knowledge, he acquires responsibility. But it is impossible to discuss this question in general, for there may be many conditions we do not know. For instance, certain knowledge may be given only on certain conditions.

Q. What a slender thread our connection with esoteric knowledge is, since it depends on you being with us to impart it.

A. It is necessary to understand that our connection with esoteric knowledge cannot depend on a person. Suppose you know a person who is connected with an esoteric school but you cannot understand his ideas. Then your connection with esoteric school does not exist, and if this person dies, the connection disappears absolutely. But suppose during the time he was alive you understood his ideas, then you are connected, and if he dies you remain connected. So you can be connected with esoteric circles only through ideas, not through people.

Q. Could the people in the system have any effect on events in life?

A. How do you see it yourself? In what way?

Q. I cannot see how they can, except for individuals to become conscious.

A. For every individual? How can you make them conscious if they do not want to? This is a characteristic example of how we think. We think that we are asking practical questions. If one asks, one must see some point of application. Suppose people could affect events – suppose there was such big magic – they must spend a certain amount of energy. And you do not know the amount of energy necessary to produce an effect against the current, even the slightest effect. Our time is very bad, very unpleasant kinds of events happen. In order to stop a typical event on a big scale the whole energy of the solar system is necessary. Can you command it? And the second thing is: do you know what is better? How can you be sure? I do not speak now about whether it is possible or not, but even if it were possible, do you have the energy and do you know what is better? We are people 1, 2 and 3; how can we know what is right? We have only just started to study a system that is supposed to bring man to a higher level. This is very useful material to think about.

Q. I find that I still cannot give up the idea of our being useful to some sort of conscious work which is going against the general madness.

A. But this is imagination, because, first of all, we must be useful to ourselves. How can we be useful to some bigger kind of work if we cannot be useful to our own work? We must first learn to be useful to our own work, and then if there is a larger work, we may be useful to it. Besides, what does being useful mean? You will remember about being connected with the third line of work? A person cannot do more than he can; there may be different circumstances, capacities and conditions, so being useful cannot be taken as an obligation. But one must think about it and use the opportunity when it comes. One thing, however, must be taken as a rule – to do nothing against the interests of the work. It does not mean that everybody can actually help at every given moment, and this is not expected or required. But everybody must be prepared to do what he can and what circumstances allow when the opportunity comes, and certainly to do nothing *against* the third line of work, for one can do many things to harm it.

In the beginning, when we spoke of A, B and C influences we did not specify what they were, we merely took them as influences. Now we must try to divide these influences into classes, and the practical side of this study will be how to control these influences, how to be receptive to certain influences and not be receptive to the influences we do not want.

In other words, we must study life. Our study of ourselves will continue, but it is necessary to begin to study external things as well, try to understand them and form a right opinion about them. We will not be able to go far if we do not learn to discriminate between external events, events on a big scale, and find what is good and what is bad from the point of view of

possible evolution. If we find in external events something that helps evolution, that will bring us to the question: how can individual evolution, that is, evolution of a small number of people, affect the general state of people? If we look at external life now and ask ourselves how we can regard it from the point of view of the existence of esoteric circles of humanity, we will see that the state of humanity is far from favourable, because, although we know that everybody cannot be in esoteric circles, there can exist in life definite influences coming from these circles. But we can say positively that we cannot see any signs of a control of things by the esoteric circles – life goes on by itself.

Roughly speaking, man's situation can be described like this: he is a machine governed by various currents coming from the big machines that surround him. What are these big machines? All big events, wars, revolutions, civilizations, religions, science, art, inventions of the last century – all these things produce different influences that act on man.

Then in connection with schools it was explained that the possibility of escape is only in schools, that is, with the help of C influences. But what is the situation of people who do not know any school, for the possibility of school-work is very small and very rare? Does it mean that it is absolutely impossible to attain anything without school, or is there such a possibility? You remember I spoke of the three traditional ways and the Fourth Way. These four ways are called subjective ways. These ways are supposed to produce certain effects. But some people, maybe very few, may develop to a certain extent even without school-work. This is called the objective way; but it is a slow way. Subjective ways are short-cuts, they are for people impatient of ordinary slow work, even if there is a certain progress. So theoretically you can get possibilities of development living quite an ordinary life, without C influence, using only the material provided by B influences. You remember about B influences: religion, philosophy, art, science? On the whole, if people can absorb enough of this material, it should be sufficient for development, but even at best it is slow and uncertain development. All schools, all ways are for impatient people; that is why they are called subjective ways. So the answer to this question is both yes and no; some people can develop without schools and some cannot, because it is a question of different types of people. Besides, the objective way also needs conditions; it does not mean that *all* people who are not in the work can develop. In a sense the objective way is even more difficult than school-work, because there one has no possibility of verifying whether what one decides to do or not to do is right or wrong. In school one can verify; but verifying is one thing and doing is another.

Q. So it is not impossible or improbable for a man to develop without the help of a school?

A. Only to a certain extent, and that also with the help of a school, only without his being aware of it. For there are many things in which the help of schools can be found – generally in religions, philosophical systems and so on.

You remember I said before that there are different schools: one person needs one kind of school, another person another kind. There are no universal schools suitable for everybody. At the same time you must realize that the chance to meet some kind of school is very rare – I mean to meet a school in real life, not in books or in theory; and if one meets a school, generally there is no other. If one finds this school too difficult and begins to look for another school, then, supposing even that one does meet another, one will find the same difficulty there. There can be no difference between schools in this respect, because differences are created by the relation of a man's state to school. So it will always be the same whatever school a man finds.

I remember being told a story once by a man who said it had been his own experience. Some disciples of a school which was half-Yogi, half-religious, found the school too difficult, so they came to another school. To their surprise they were immediately given the same task to do, but with some additional difficulty. One of them asked the man who gave them the task how he knew, whether it meant that schools communicated with each other when a man left.

The teacher answered: 'It is not worth while communicating when a man runs away from one school and comes to another. As soon as I saw you I realized the kind of task you had been given, and could only give you the same but perhaps a little more difficult.' So, you see, there is really no choice.

Q. What will happen if one acquires change of being without school?

A. If one gets being or knowledge so to speak undeservedly, it is generally incomplete and worse than nothing, with the exception of very rare cases in the objective way; but the latter happens so seldom that it is no use speaking about it. Certain examples of wrong ways will be explained later, because in understanding the wrong way we can understand better the right way. For instance, efforts can be made on the basis of fear, but it will not be a right effort, because right effort should be based on understanding, not on fear.

To return to our situation, we must remember all that we have heard and understood about attitudes. Our attitudes are like wires which connect us with events, and certain currents produced by the nature of these attitudes flow through these wires, and the nature of the current determines the kind of influence we receive from a given event. If a certain event produces an influence on us, this influence can be changed by our attitude.

We must create a certain understanding of external things. This means we must judge them not by personal sympathies and antipathies but, as I said, from the point of view of their relation to possible evolution, that is, we must judge them from the point of view of a possible increase of the power of esotericism, because evolution of mankind means an increase of the power of esoteric circles over life.

I said that at every moment one is surrounded by a great many big moving things which *always* affect one whether one is aware of it or not. They always affect one in one way or another. One may have very definite attitudes towards such things as wars, revolutions, events of social or political life and so on, or one may be indifferent, or negative, or positive towards them. In any case, being positive on one side means being negative on another, so it does not change anything. Right attitude includes understanding the quality of a thing from the point of view of evolution and of obstacles to evolution, meaning by 'evolution' conscious, voluntary and intentional development of an individual man on definite lines and in a definite direction during the period of his earthly life. Things that do not help are simply not considered, however big they may be externally – one does not 'see' them. And if one does not consider or see them, one can get rid of their influence. Only, again, it is necessary to understand that not considering wrong things does not mean indifference, because people who are indifferent do not consider things, but are affected by them all the same.

I repeat again, it is necessary to think about things using the ordinary emotional and ordinary thinking faculty and to try to find in what relation they stand to what we call evolution, that is, increase of the influence of inner circles and growth of the possibility for the right kind of people to acquire the right kind of knowledge. We have to understand the weight of things. You remember, it was explained about words that they have different weight and it is necessary to feel their weight. It is the same with events. Just as in ourselves there are many imaginary, invented things, so there are also in life. Because people believe in them, they produce an effect. In this sense almost the whole of life is not real. People live in non-existent things and do not see the real things; they do not even bother to think about them, being completely satisfied with the imaginary.

Try to concentrate on the question of what is important and what is unimportant; we must learn to distinguish these things. So far, with the help of the work, we could define good and evil in relation to ourselves. Now we must come out of our shell and try to look around, using the same methods and the same principles. If we use one type of principles for ourselves and another for external things, we will never get anything out of it. We do not think sufficiently of the relation of this work to life in general, we do not give account to ourselves of the

position it occupies as regards life. I do not say you can answer this question, but you can think about it, see it from one angle or another angle. Unless you think about it, things will not be in their right perspective for you and you will not understand the work in the right way. The work is a small thing, and enormous things belong to life. I do not mean by this wars and revolutions and things of this kind, but things belonging to everyday life. You will see that it occupies no position at all and need not exist from the point of view of life.

At the same time the work is the most important thing for those who understand it. So we must make it go on and not expect any help from life. We must go against life, do everything ourselves. We cannot think that there is plenty of time, that if we do not do something now we will do it next year, for next year things may be different.

Analysis of events in life can be based on the idea of influences A, B and C. We can ask ourselves, how many influences of the third kind, that is, influences conscious both in their origin and action, do we see? We must admit that we never see them. If we are looking for something, we meet only with certain manifestations of influence B, and every influence B is surrounded by all possible dangers and all kinds of forces trying to destroy it. Many influences B are disappearing under our eyes; things that could be found not so long ago cannot be found any more. How many influences B of the past reach us? They do not live long, they have a short life, with the exception of two or three which are surrounded by such a tangle of mechanical adaptations that they almost become influences A – they survive only in this form. All mechanical forces tend to destroy them because in their origin they are opposed to mechanical forces.

Q. What is the connection between civilization of the world and personal evolution?

A. We do not realize that the beginning of many activities in life is the work of conscious people. We think that all the work we see was begun and continued by people such as we are, by sleeping people. But sleeping people can only accidentally invent something useful, and they invent both useful and harmful things with equal pleasure – they cannot distinguish the one from the other. If we accept the word ‘civilization’ – it is the work of sleeping people, so there is no guarantee: there may be civilization to-day and barbarism to-morrow.

Supposing that what you or someone else calls civilization destroys influences B and you find yourself surrounded by influences A, you will have no chance. And, indeed, what we ordinarily call civilization does destroy influences B. Revolutions destroy, wars destroy, civilizations destroy – everything destroys esoteric influences. For instance, schools have always been destroyed by wars; that is a well-known fact. Schools cannot be established permanently. It is not exactly that wars intended to destroy schools, they did it by the way. War is one of these institutions in the life of humanity which make work impossible and destroy schools. School-work needs a certain amount of normality in life; if life becomes too abnormal, school-work becomes impossible, and a school disappears.

Q. But people who profit by school-work do not disappear; what they learned would not leave them?

A. If they learned enough they will profit by it, but if they only learned a little they cannot profit much. There is a certain standard, a certain amount of knowledge necessary, and if you acquire this amount you can continue to work, but if you did not get enough you cannot. Individual people, if they have reached a certain stage in development of consciousness, can isolate themselves from circumstances and can continue to work so long as they remain alive. But school is under different laws: it needs an external form. Schools can do nothing about it – they have to take circumstances as they are, both big and small schools, elementary or highly developed. They have to exist in whatever circumstances they find themselves, and if circumstances become impossible, schools become impossible. This must be kept in mind.

There is another thing in connection with this. Religion is a more stable thing. Maybe it was organized in that way in order to exist. But schools cannot be organized in the same way, they need a certain minimum of security to survive.

Q. Why has the influence of the esoteric circles been diminishing lately?

A. People are becoming less and less sane. They need less truth and are more incapable of distinguishing it and more easily satisfied with lies. Interest in these ideas is much less and people's preparation is much less than even thirty or forty years ago. And this is not only the result of political events, although they also have their part in it.

Q. In what sense do you mean people are less prepared?

A. For instance, the idea of esotericism was not explained in St Petersburg; it was supposed to be known. Now it can no longer be assumed that the psychological method of thinking, the existence of esotericism and the need for schools of an esoteric origin is understood. We can never understand the meaning of esotericism and the inner circles of humanity until we understand that life is chaos and that things, instead of becoming more controlled and orderly are becoming only more complicated and less controlled. We take complication for progress. In ordinary life people's actions are not co-ordinated and results are unforeseen. Each man works in his own direction and the combined results produce things. Results in life are the results of cross-purposes, not the results of intentional actions. It is necessary to understand that this is always so in the outer circle and it cannot be different. We can do nothing to change this state of affairs. We are corks on the waves which think that they control currents. It is very important to think about that and to look at things from this point of view. If one does not understand the difference between the inner and the outer circles, one will not understand further. What is possible in the inner circles is impossible in our circle.

Q. Should not the present state of the world make more people look for schools? People are frightened, they feel uncomfortable.

A. Why should one discomfort lead to another discomfort? Do you think that will make them come? You expect too much of them. You can say to a man that if he studies the system he will be more awake, but you cannot say he will be better off.

Q. They will get rid of identification.

A. And they will say that they cannot work without identification, and if they are not identified, they will lose all their money. There is no connection between interest in the system and the discomfort of the present situation.

Q. I have been very puzzled by my observation of young people. If they are happy and thoroughly normal, the idea of esotericism does not seem to appeal to them.

A. The idea of esotericism is very difficult. Sometimes one can catch its meaning at an early age, but often one fails to see it from the right angle. We have so many wrong attitudes and wrong ideas that nothing can be expected. I think a person who becomes seriously interested in these ideas is an exception, because people's minds are in such a confusion with absurd and contradictory ideas.

Q. I am only interested in the psychological side of the system, but not in esotericism.

A. But the psychological side is also esoteric. The system gives you nothing that is not esoteric, for the whole of it comes from minds that are not ordinary minds; it comes from people who understood things. Ordinary systems cannot bring about any change. The psychological side of the system is even more esoteric than the other side, or it would have no value. It has value only because it comes from higher minds, from their understanding and their ideas. This must be understood. We got this system somehow. If we suppose it has been created by men on the same level as we are, or that it is a theory, it has no value at all. But it is not a theory; it is supposed to come from school, from men of higher development. If there were no men of higher development, we would have no system.

In the beginning in Russia Mr Gurdjieff always insisted that it was not a system; it was just fragments and one had to make a system out of them. And he insisted that it should be given in this way. Now I make it more of a system, because we have more people. But when it was only a small group it was just conversations and not lectures. In lectures it is difficult to speak in fragments, but on the whole it is still fragments, all the same. These fragments are on different scales, so you must understand much to put them together on the right scale. The same words and the same theories are used in different diagrams, for instance – all on quite different scales.

Q. Can you give an example of what it means that it is taught in fragments?

A. Many things are taught like that: all about building up energies, the psychological side, the explanation of how the machine works, the side concerning the world and so on. It is very important to understand this. Only when you begin to understand how the scale changes will you be able to understand the system. As I said, it is taught in fragments each of which is on a different scale. You have to put them together and at the same time correct the scale. It is like several geographical maps, each on a different scale, cut into pieces. You have to see which piece fits which, where the scale is very different and where it is less different. This is the only way to study this system.

Q. Do you mean we cannot talk about the worlds unless we reduce them to our scale?

A. No, what I meant is quite different. Of course, we reduce everything, but what I meant is that we have to study things on different scales and we must remember this and realize the relationship of different scales and the fact that things change with change of scale. Also we must bear in mind that, about many things, we believe that they mean something, when actually they mean nothing at all. The system teaches us to find the difference between realities and imaginary quantities (and even worse than imaginary).

Q. I feel we have only half the knowledge of the system we could have.

A. Much less than half. Such as we are, we can only get fragments but sufficiently big to build something out of them. We must try to understand the structure. When you have all the fragments before you, you may see certain connections, and when you find these connections you may see many other things.

Q. Have you altered the teaching much?

A. I have not altered it. But I prefer sometimes to start from a different point. In this system, as in any organic system, one can start from any point – this is not an alteration. Everything else remains the same, but I prefer to start with the psychological side.

Q. Have the people in the inner circle any control over people in the outer circle?

A. Yes, but with many reservations. The conscious circle cannot act directly, but only through B influences. Influences C can appear only if influences B are accepted and if people look for them. Men in the inner circle cannot have control over people who do not wish to know them. They cannot use violence, because it would mean a wrong triad, a wrong activity. For every kind of result there is a special triad. For instance, if people wish to acquire control, they can achieve it only in one way. If they act in another way they will get the opposite result. Wars, revolutions and so on never give the desired results, but always the opposite results, because wrong triads are used. If people of the inner circles wish to influence other people, they can produce good results only if there is understanding, and only with people who wish it. This is a useful question. Try to think about it.

Q. You spoke of the insecure times we live in. Will the school take precautions to protect itself? I understood you to say that a school is not under the law of accident.

A. I meant that a school cannot be formed by accident, but it can be destroyed by accident. It cannot be formed mechanically, but it can be destroyed mechanically. Take some work of art – it will not be created purely mechanically, it will be made by some special triad – but it can be burnt like anything else.

Q. If schools are real living things, why do they die?

A. What do you mean by saying that schools are living things? It is vague and indefinite. But if we take it literally it will make it quite clear why schools die. All living beings die sooner or later. If people die, schools must also die. I have explained that schools need certain conditions. If these conditions are destroyed, the school is destroyed.

Q. But the ideas may remain?

A. Ideas cannot fly: they need human heads. And a school does not consist of ideas; you always forget that school teaches how to improve being.

Q. Were no ideas written down in the past?

A. Certainly there were, but ideas can be written down in different forms; they may be written down in such a way that nobody can read them without explanation from those who know or without change of being. Take the Gospels – they are written in different ciphers; one must know the key to decipher them, otherwise it would be just a story, doubtful historically and producing many wrong effects.

Q. Will the system give the key to the Gospels?

A. Some keys, but you cannot expect all the keys. Many of the keys can be got only with change of being, they cannot be only a matter of knowledge. Again you forget about being. Change of being means connection with higher centres. Higher centres can understand many things which ordinary centres cannot.

Q. Then the New Testament must have misled many people?

A. The New Testament is written for schools and for different levels. In schools every word is explained. Every sentence in the New Testament has dozens of meanings, that is why there are so many things in it we do not understand. We are trying to pass from the level of man 1, 2 and 3 to the level of understanding of man No. 4; other people may be trying to pass to the level of man No 5, yet others to the level of man No 6 and so on – and they all read the New Testament So we cannot expect, on our level, to understand all of it, since it is written in a very clever way. When somebody said it is under seven locks, he was quite right. One must find one key and use it and then, with its help, one will find a second key, and so on, but one will not understand it until one has opened all the seven locks. So if we understand all that is possible to understand on our level, we may get the possibility of understanding more.

Q. Can a school reach a higher level than the school it started from?

A. Yes, if it works according to methods and principles of school-work, it can grow. But again you must remember that the level of the school depends on the level of being of the people who constitute it

Q. Was self-remembering a feature of the old esoteric knowledge?

A. Always, everywhere. Only sometimes, for instance in religious schools, it is called by a different name. It is not arbitrary, self-remembering is a necessary stage in man's development, not an arbitrarily imposed task. One has to pass through it, and one can pass through it only in one way.

Q. Did Christ at any time speak about it, and in what words?

A. Almost on every page, in different words, for instance, 'Watch', 'Do not sleep'. He spoke about it all the time.

Q. How should one consider church religion?

A. We cannot discuss religion, because it is quite a different thing, different elements enter into it. Every religion is based on faith and, as I said already, faith does not enter into our system. All we can say is that religions are on different levels, as I have explained in the first lectures. Religion is a relative term. All people are divided into men of different levels and all religions are divided in the same way. Each religion has all the degrees. This is one of the very important things to understand. We only know the horizontal divisions – historical and geographical. But there exist other divisions. There are religious ways, and religion does not

contradict any other system, the difference lies in different levels. Suppose you know religion No 2 – it is not sufficient if you want to study yourself and become No 4. And suppose you find that this system is on a certain level and do not know of a religion of a sufficiently high level – then conflict is possible. Conflict is possible only between different levels.

Q. I feel since I met this system that I seem to understand the Prayer Book and the Bible better. Can it help us by giving a better understanding of the teaching of Christ?

A. I already said that this system is not a religion. You can improve your mental machine and your capacity for understanding, and you can make your emotions better. But whether the system can help you in this direction I cannot say. Later you may be able to see the connection between the ideas of the system and the esoteric parts of religion. But we do not know esoteric religion, so we cannot speak about it.

A very similar question was asked Mr Gurdjieff in St Petersburg. Someone asked in what relation this system stood to Christianity. Mr Gurdjieff said many things about how different people understand Christianity differently. And then he said: ‘If you like, this is esoteric Christianity’. And he added: ‘What from your point of view is the most important thing in Christ’s teaching? It is action: do this, do not do that. The question is – can you do it? You must decide for yourself whether you can understand it better now or not, but you must take Christianity as a teaching of action, not as a mental teaching.

If you take the Christian teaching without the modern sentimental attitude, you will see that it is the most exclusive of all religions. It is constantly repeated and repeated that only a few have a chance – difficult way, narrow way, only a few can pass through, and so on.

Q. One cannot help thinking that the Absolute is one name for God.

A. No, you are quite wrong. The Absolute is the principle that lies in the beginning of things and behind everything. I never connected the Absolute with God in the religious sense. God in religion can do many things for you, but the Absolute can do nothing for you. So it is not God in that sense; you cannot pray to the Absolute. If you take a religious question, follow the religious explanation. If you see a difference, keep them separate.

Q. Is it a fact that there are higher forces one can contact when one is in a better state?

A. In every situation, in every question we must keep to what we can know, to what we can be sure about, and we can be sure that most of our time we are in a state in which we cannot be in contact with higher forces, Either we are fully asleep and no higher forces can penetrate to us, or we are negative so that everything that comes to us is transformed into one or another kind of negativeness. In such a state, what can we expect?

Q. Are there many esoteric teachings or only one?

A. Every teaching of an esoteric origin agrees fundamentally with the others. In order to be true, the teaching must be one of many. If it is unique, it means it is invented

Q. In the New Testament we are very often told to watch and pray. What is it in the system which corresponds to prayer?

A. Whose prayer? If a machine prays, what can be the result? Which prayer? Prayer does not necessarily mean petition. Most prayers have as their aim keeping the mind on certain ideas – a form of meditation.

Q. Do you think that self-consciousness can be achieved by prayer? And if so, how should one pray?

A. If one could really pray continuously, it would create self-consciousness. The whole thing is that we cannot. A man decides to pray and five minutes later it becomes a mechanical repetition of words. If one could pray, prayer could do it, but one cannot, because one is not. Man could do many things if *he was*, that is, if he was permanent. As it is, one starts, another continues.

Q. Is true prayer contact with higher powers?

A. I will not argue against it, but we know quite concretely that in ordinary centres we only have the powers that belong to them. At the same time we learn that higher centres have many powers that ordinary centres do not have. So I can answer in the language of the system that if this contact is possible, it is only possible through higher centres. Our problem is how to approach higher centres. We cannot have contact now, but higher centres may have. Nobody can guarantee it, because even our expectations may be wrong. In any case we know – and some people have had their short experiences of it – that higher centres have new powers, so all we can do is to try to become connected with higher centres by studying how to become conscious. When we become conscious, we shall have contact with higher centres, and then we may have new powers and new knowledge.

Q. But do we not already have flashes of higher emotional centre?

A. Some people do, but they are only flashes which they cannot control. Only man No. 5 can control these things, and we are but men No 1, 2 and 3.

Q. According to some esoteric teachings the mind of a man is like a pool. When it is calm he can see things clearly and listen to ‘the voice of the silence’.

A. There are many dangers in that. It is so easy to mix the real ‘voice of the silence’ with an imaginary voice, so easy to mix truth with imagination. It may be the way for some people, but it is not the way for us. We want to know more precisely how to evolve, so for us all such definitions are dangerous, for there is no instrument by which we can separate the imagination in them from reality. That is what you must remember in this system – that you learn how to separate the imaginary from the real from the very beginning, when you learn to distinguish *in yourself* imagination from reality. Then later, on higher levels of consciousness, you will be able to separate it in the objective world. Many of these mystical ways only increase confusion. Instead of bringing man nearer to truth, they lead him further from it.

Q. Then should man continually seek irritations?

A. Why irritations? You take that for granted and then try to find opposite. You can try all your life and get nothing, if you work in the wrong way. But you must try, in the right way, to remember yourself, not to identify, to gain control. Nobody has enough control. We are not masters of ourselves, and this is why we cannot begin to do this and not do that. We have to study first, and understand first. We must study ourselves, and sometimes we can turn one little thing and another little thing, and in this way we begin to change. One cannot start with this big calm. One can want to be calm, if one is not calm, but that is the same as speaking of such Christian principles as loving your enemies.

Q. Is not the A B C of all esoteric knowledge the death of the seed?

A. We may take it like that. As a matter of fact, in connection with this there is another thing which may perhaps explain our situation. I remember long ago Mr Gurdjieff said about this expression repeated two or three times in the New Testament, that in order to germinate and produce a plant a seed must die, that it was not complete in relation to man. In relation to man it must be amplified. Speaking in general about the work, about its possibilities and about the direction of the work, Mr Gurdjieff explained it to us like this. First we must realize that we are asleep; secondly we must awake. When we are awake we must die; when we die we can be born. This is the process in detail and the direction. It is useful to think about it, useful to understand what sleep means, what to awake means, what to die means and what it would mean to be born. Suppose we want to be born. We cannot be born until we die, and we cannot die until we awake. We cannot awake until we realize that we are asleep. So there are definite steps.

Q. What does to die mean in the sense in which you speak?

A. ‘To die’ means to die, to disappear, not to be, not to exist. It is useless to die in sleep, because then you cannot be born. You must awake first.

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I have been asked many questions, some of them very naive, by different people who have tried to understand the Lord's Prayer and who came to me asking me to explain what one or another phrase in it means. For instance, I have been asked what 'our Father in heaven' means, who are 'our debtors' and what are 'our debts' and so on – as if the Lord's Prayer could be explained in 'plain words'. You must understand first of all that ordinary, plain words cannot explain anything in relation to the Lord's Prayer. Some preparatory understanding is necessary, then further understanding may come, but only as a result of effort and right attitude.

The Lord's Prayer can be taken as an example of an insoluble problem. It has been translated into every language, learnt by heart, repeated daily, yet people have not the slightest idea of what it really means. This failure to understand its meaning is connected with our general inability to understand the New Testament. If you remember, in another conversation, the whole of the New Testament was given as an example of objective art, that is to say, the work of higher mind. How then can we expect to understand with our ordinary mind what was formulated and given by higher mind?

What we can do is to try and raise our mind to the level of thinking of higher mind; and although we do not realize it, this is possible in many different ways. In mathematics, for instance, we can deal with infinities – with infinitely small and infinitely large quantities which mean nothing to our ordinary mind. And what is possible in mathematics is possible for us if we start in the right way and continue in the right way.

One of the first things which must be understood and remembered, before a study of the Lord's Prayer is possible, is the difference between the religious language and system language.

What is religion? This word is used very often; there are people who use it every day, but they cannot define what is meant by religion.

In the system we have heard that religion is different for different people, that there is religion of man No. 1, a religion of man No. 2, a religion of man No. 3 and so on. But how can we define the difference between them? Before coming to definitions we must understand first of all that the most necessary element in all religions known to us is the idea of God – a God with whom we can stand in a personal relationship, to whom we can, as it were, speak, whom we can beg for help, and in the possibility of whose help we can believe. An inseparable part of religion is faith in God, that is, in a Higher Being, omnipotent and omnipresent, who can help us in anything we wish for or want to do.

I do not speak from the point of view of whether this is right or wrong, possible or impossible. I simply say that faith, that is belief in God and in his power to help us, is an essential part of religion.

Prayer is also an inseparable part of any religion; but prayer can be very different. Prayer can be a petition for help in anything we may undertake, and also, through school-work, prayer can become help itself. It can become an instrument of work which can be used for reviving ideas of the system, it can be used for self-remembering and for reminding us about sleep and the necessity for awakening.

At the same time, the expressions of religious language cannot be translated exactly into the system language. First, because of the element of faith in religion, and secondly, because of the acceptance in religion and religious language of facts and assertions which in the system are regarded as illogical and inconsistent. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to say that religion and the system are incompatible or contradictory; only, we must learn not to mix the two languages. If we begin to mix them, we shall spoil any useful conclusions that could be made on either of the two lines.

Returning to the idea of God, an idea which is inseparable from religion and religious language, we must first ask ourselves how religions can be divided in a general or historical

way. They may be divided into religions with one God and religions with many gods. But even in this division it must be remembered that there is a great difference between the ordinary understanding of monotheism and polytheism and the system understanding of the same ideas. Although there are certain differences between gods – as, for instance, in Greek mythology – in the ordinary understanding of polytheism all gods are more or less on the same level. From the system point of view, which includes the idea of different scales and different laws on different levels, one has quite a different understanding of the interdependence of gods.

If we take the Absolute as God, we can see that it has no relation to us. The Absolute is God for gods; it has relation only to the next world, that is, World 3. The World 3 is God for the next world, that is, World 6, and also for all the following worlds, but in a lesser and lesser degree. Then the Galaxy, Sun, Planets, Earth and Moon are all gods, each including in itself smaller gods. The Ray of Creation as a whole, taken as one triad, is also God: God the Holy, God the Firm, God the Immortal.

So we may choose on which level we wish to take our God if we want to use the word ‘God’ in the religious sense, that is to say, in the sense of a God having immediate access to our lives. From the system point of view we have nothing to prove that any of these worlds may have a personal relation to us; but there is a place for God in the system.

In the lateral octave which begins in the Sun as ‘do’ there are two quite unknown points about which we have no material for thinking. The octave begins as *do* in the Sun, then passes into *si* on the level of the Planets. On Earth it becomes *la-sol-fa*, which constitutes Organic Life including man. When each individual being in the human, animal and vegetable kingdom dies, the body – or what remains of the body – goes to the Earth and becomes part of the Earth, and the soul goes to the Moon and becomes part of the Moon. From this we can understand *mi* and *re*; but about *si* and *do* we know nothing at all. These two notes may give rise to many suppositions as to the possible place of a God or gods having some relation to us in the Ray of Creation.

Now, remembering all that has just been said, we may come to the study of the Lord’s Prayer.

The first thing is to discover why and when it was given. We know that it was given to replace many useless prayers.

The next thing is to note many interesting features in the Lord’s Prayer itself and in its very special construction; and from our understanding of this construction, and particularly from our knowledge of the Law of Three, we may be able to realize that, from the system point of view, there is a possibility of the development of understanding through our understanding of the Lord’s Prayer.

Like many mathematical problems, the study of the Lord’s Prayer must begin with a correct disposition or arrangement of the separate parts of the problem. We notice at once two interesting things: first, that the Lord’s Prayer is divided into three times three, and second, that in the Lord’s Prayer there are certain key-words, that is to say, words which explain other words to which they refer. We cannot call the division into three times three triads, because we do not know their relation to one another and cannot see the forces. We can only see that there are three parts.

If you read the first three petitions together as one part, you will see many things which you cannot see if you read them in the ordinary way.

1. Our Father which art in heaven hallowed be Thy name
2. Thy kingdom come
3. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

In the first petition, ‘Our Father which art in heaven hallowed be Thy name’, the immediate question is, who is ‘our Father’? The key-word is ‘heaven’. What does ‘in heaven’ mean? If

we try to answer this question from the point of view of the Ray of Creation we may be able to understand something. We live on the Earth, so 'heaven' must mean higher levels, that is, the Planets, the Sun or the Galaxy. The idea of 'heaven' presupposes certain forces, or certain mind or minds on those higher levels to which, in some way, the Lord's Prayer advises us to appeal; 'heaven' cannot refer to anything on the level of the Earth. But if we realize that the cosmic forces connected with the Galaxy, the Sun or the Planets are too big to have any relation to us, then we can look for the place of *our* 'Father in heaven' in the *do* or *si* of the lateral octave – or we can again leave it to higher regions.

In the words which follow there is nothing personal. 'Hallowed be Thy name' is the expression of a desire for the development of the right attitude towards God, and for a better understanding of the idea of God or Higher Mind, and this desire for development obviously refers to the whole of humanity.

The second petition, 'Thy kingdom come', is the expression of a desire for the growth of esotericism. In *A New Model of the Universe* I tried to explain that the kingdom of heaven could only mean esotericism, that is to say, a certain inner part of humanity under particular laws.

The third petition, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven', is the expression of a desire for the transition of the Earth to a higher level, under the direct will of Higher Mind. 'Thy will be done' refers to something that may happen but has not yet happened. These three petitions refer to conditions which may come but which have not yet been fulfilled.

The first petition of the second part of the Lord's Prayer is:

'Give us this day our daily bread'.

The word 'daily' does not exist in the oldest known Greek and Latin text. The correct word, which later was replaced by 'daily', is 'super-substantialis' or 'supersubstantial'. The correct text should be: 'give us to-day our supersubstantial Bread'. 'Supersubstantial' or 'spiritual' as some people say, may refer to higher food, higher hydrogens, higher influences or higher knowledge.

The two following petitions in this second part,

'Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors', and

'Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil' are the most difficult to understand or to explain. They are particularly difficult because their ordinary meaning, as generally accepted, has nothing to do with the real meaning. When people think about the words, 'forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors' in the ordinary way, they immediately begin to make logical and psychological mistakes. First of all, they take for granted that they can forgive debts, and that it depends on them whether they will forgive or not forgive; and secondly, they believe that it is equally good to forgive debts and to have their own debts forgiven. This is a fallacy and has no foundation whatever. If they think about themselves, if they study themselves, if they observe themselves, they will very soon see that they *cannot forgive any debts* just as they *cannot do anything*.

In order to *do* and in order to *forgive* one must first of all be able to remember oneself, one must be awake and one must have *will*. As we are now, we have thousands of different wills, and even if one of these wills wants to forgive, there are always many others which do not want to forgive and which will think that forgiveness is a weakness, an inconsistency or even a crime. And the strangest thing is that sometimes it is really a crime to forgive. Here we come to an interesting point. We do not know whether it is good to forgive or not, whether it is good to forgive always, or whether in some cases it is better to forgive and in some cases better not to forgive. If we think more about it, we may come to the conclusion that even if we could forgive, perhaps it would be better to wait until we knew more, that is, until we knew in which cases it is better to forgive and in which cases it is better not to forgive.

At this point we should remember what has been said about positive and negative attitudes and we should realize that positive attitudes are not always correct, negative attitudes are sometimes necessary for a right understanding. So, if 'forgiving' always means having a positive attitude, then forgiving may sometimes be quite wrong.

We must understand that to forgive indiscriminately may be worse than not to forgive at all; and this understanding may bring us to the right view of our own position in relation to our own debts. Suppose for a moment that there actually was some benevolent and rather stupid deity who could forgive our debts, and who would really forgive them and wipe them out. It would be the greatest misfortune that could happen to us. There would be no incentive for us to work then, and no reason to work. We could go on doing the same wrong things and having them all forgiven in the end. Such a possibility is quite contrary to any idea of the work. In the work we must know that nothing will be forgiven. Only this knowledge will give us a real incentive to work, and at least prevent us from repeating the same things which we already know to be wrong.

It is interesting to look at schools from this point of view and to compare schools with ordinary life. In life people may expect forgiveness, or at least hope for it. In school nothing is forgiven. That is an essential part of a school system, school method and school organization. Schools exist precisely for not-forgiving, and because of this fact one can hope and expect to get something from a school. If things were forgiven in schools, there would be no reason for their existence.

The inner meaning of 'Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors' actually refers to influences, that is to say, influences from higher levels. We can attract to ourselves higher influences only if we transfer to other people the influences we receive or have received. There are many other meanings of these words, but this is the beginning of the way to understand them.

The third petition of this second part is:

'Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil'. What is our greatest temptation? Most probably it is sleep: so the first words are understandable – 'help us to sleep less, or help us to awake sometimes'. The next part is more difficult. It reads: 'But deliver us from evil'. Possibly it should be '*and* deliver us from evil'. There are many interpretations of this 'but', but none of them is quite satisfactory as translated into ordinary language, so I shall leave it for the present.

The chief question is, what does 'evil' mean? One possible interpretation is that in relation to the ordinary temptation, which is only sleep, it means letting oneself fall asleep again when one had already begun to awake. It may mean giving up the work when one has already understood the necessity for working, giving up efforts after one had begun to make efforts and, as has already been mentioned, starting to do stupid or even harmful things, such as going against school rules and justifying oneself for so doing. Many interesting examples of things of this kind can be found in the actions of people who leave the work and particularly in their explanations of their doing so.

Finally, the third part of the Lord's Prayer should be taken as referring to a future order of things and not to the present order.

1. For Thine is the kingdom
2. the power
3. and the glory for ever Amen,

presupposes that the desire expressed in the first part of the Prayer has already been realized, has already taken place. Actually these words can only refer to the future.

In conclusion, the whole of the Lord's Prayer can be taken as one triad. It cannot be taken in the sense that one part is active force, another part passive force and a third part neutralizing force, because all relations probably change with the change in the centre of

gravity of attention. This means that, by itself, each of these three divisions or parts can be taken as one force and that together they can make a triad.

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These very big ideas are put in the form of a prayer. When you decipher this idea of prayer, prayer in the sense of supplication, disappears.

Q. What is the difference between forgiving and being forgiven?

A. Subject and object. But we cannot be forgiven. We did something and, according to the law of cause and effect, a certain result will be produced. We cannot change the law, but we can become free – escape from it. We can change the present, through the present the future, and through the future the past. We must pay our debts. By paying them we change the past, but there are different ways of paying.

Q. What are the different ways of paying our debts?

A. Mechanically or consciously. We pay them in any case: by waiting for the results of causes and paying thus, or by changing the past and paying in another way. To-day is the result of some past. If we change to-day, we change the past.

Q. Is changing the past struggling against the way things go?

A. This is the beginning only. Positive emotions and higher influences are necessary. We cannot change anything without them. There are several stages. This does not come at once; it is necessary to work. I have put some principles – it is necessary to see how we can reach this.

There are many interesting things in this. For instance, there is no word 'I' or 'me' in the Lord's Prayer. That means there can be no personal favours – all people stand in the same relation to higher forces, all need the same things.

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