

## CHAPTER XVI

*The idea of recurrence can only be regarded as a theory – Different relationship of people to the possibility of recurrence – Three successive stages – Why the possibility of receiving C influence must be limited – Remembering past lives – Theory of reincarnation as a simplification of the idea of recurrence – Impossibility of finding proof – We are limited by the state of our being – Different kinds of essence as the strongest argument in favour of pre-existence – Why schools cannot recur – Study of recurrence in one life – Eternal recurrence is not eternal – Possibility of variations – Chances are limited and time is counted – Self-remembering and recurrence – Personality and recurrence – Study of children's minds – Origin of the idea of recurrence – Three dimensions of time – The idea of recurrence and the system – Parallel time – Limitations of our mind – Growth of tendencies and recurrence – Possibilities of meeting a school next time – Being prepared – Is the starting-point the same for everybody? – School and the demands made in it – Death of essence – Recurrence and date of death – Recurrence of world events – The only thing is to awake.*

I CONSTANTLY GET QUESTIONS REFERRING TO RECURRENCE, SO I want to say something about it which may give you material for thinking. There are two reasons why I avoid speaking about it: first, we can only talk about the theory, we have no real facts about it; and secondly, we do not know whether in connection with the work the laws referring to recurrence change. It is necessary to understand these things. We know very little about recurrence. Some day we may try to collect what can be taken as reliable in all that is written about recurrence and see which way we can think about it, but it is only a theory.

I wrote in *A New Model of the Universe*, long ago, that even in ordinary life people may be very different in relation to recurrence. Some people may have exactly the same recurrence, other people may have different variations or possibilities; some may go up and others may go down, and many other things. But this is all without relation to the work. In the case of people who come nearer to the work, it may be possible, though only theoretically, to study three successive recurrences. Let us suppose that the first is when one comes close to the possibility of meeting with some kind of ideas of higher mind; the second, when one definitely comes in contact with C influence; and the third, which would be the result of it. The interesting thing is that, after the second, the possibilities of recurrence greatly diminish. Before one comes into contact with C influence, they look unlimited, but after this contact the possibility of recurrence is reduced. If we understand that, we will be able to speak about recurrence with a certain amount of reason and profit; otherwise, if we take everything on the same plane, it will be just theoretical talk and quite useless.

Q. Do you mean that after coming in contact with C influences the number of chances diminishes?

A. Yes, because C influence cannot be wasted. B influences are practically unlimited; this means they are thrown into life and one can take or not take them; they do not diminish. But C influence is limited. Try to answer this question for yourselves and you will understand why the possibility of receiving C influence must be limited, because if one does not make use of it, what is the good of wasting it?

Q. Does it mean if we worked in the right way our chances would increase?

A. No, it does not mean that at all. It merely means that if we do not work in the right way we will lose the possibility of these chances recurring.

Without this additional feature I have just mentioned it is quite useless to speak about recurrence even as a theory. In thinking about recurrence, it is useful to think about what is possible and what is impossible; what can happen and what cannot happen. Generally people either do not accept this idea, or do not know about it, or do not understand it, or else accept too

much, put too much into it. So it is useful to think in what relation we stand to it, and for this we must have a basis from which to start. For instance, it refers to 'remembering'. People often ask about remembering past lives, but they forget that without the work of higher centres they cannot. Very often you hear people say, chiefly in connection with what they call 'reincarnation', that they can remember their lives in previous incarnations, and they write books about what they were before. This is pure fantasy. You must understand that in our ordinary state we cannot remember past lives – there is nothing to remember with. In our mind and centres, it is all new. What may pass from one life to another is essence. So one can have only such vague sensations, instead of definite recollections, that it is hard to suppose that anyone can remember anything concrete. Only in the first years of life is it really possible, but then one generally does not notice this feeling, or if one does, it creates imagination.

Q. What is the difference between the theory of reincarnation and the theory of recurrence?

A. The idea of reincarnation is a kind of adaptation of the idea of recurrence to our ordinary understanding, because, as a theory, the idea of recurrence is much more difficult for us – it needs quite a new understanding of time. Even educated people need a certain amount of mathematical knowledge to understand the idea of return. Recurrence is in eternity, but reincarnation is in time. It supposes that time exists apart from us and that we continue to exist in this time after death. For instance, in Buddhism they take it that a man dies and is immediately born again, so that one life follows another, because this is easier to understand for ordinary people. But we have no evidence of the existence of time beyond our life. Time is life for each person, and it includes in itself all time, so that when life ends, time ends. So reincarnation is a less scientific theory than recurrence – too much is taken for granted.

Q. But where do all these lives take place?

A. We do not speak about the place, but about recurrence. If you say that you remember that you lived in Rome, for instance, how can you find proof? It is impossible. So each theory can exist on different planes. The theory of recurrence can exist on a certain plane which requires a certain knowledge and a certain understanding, and then it can be distorted and brought down to lower and lower planes. This can happen with every theory and sometimes in the process it can even become its own opposite. But you must always remember that we cannot prove anything and cannot insist on any particular theory. Only, we must understand each theory within its own limits and its own cycle and see what is possible and what is impossible from the point of view of this theory. If you take a theory and proceed to add one thing and to take away another, that would be wrong. In each theory one must study what it includes, and nothing must be omitted. So if we find a theory that is philosophically possible, we can look for conditions in which it would cease to be a theory and would become a fact.

Q. Am I wrong in assuming that you yourself are not convinced in the reality of the theory of eternal recurrence?

A. I tried to explain that you *cannot* be convinced of these theories. If you think you can be convinced, it will be just belief. There are whole series of questions and problems about which all we can do is to form theories, without ever being really convinced that one theory is better than another. As a theory I would say that the theory of recurrence is better than the theory of reincarnation, but we have no real evidence as to whether it is nearer to facts or not. And we cannot have evidence because of our state of consciousness. The only possibility, from the point of view of work, is to hope that perhaps, if we change our state of consciousness, our possibilities of observation will increase. In our present state we can have nothing but theories about such things.

We are limited by the state of our being, and the state of being of man 1, 2 and 3 is such that we cannot know these things for certain.

Q. Did you say that one could not possibly remember a former life?

A. Yes. Only essence can remember, and since in ordinary man essence is unorganized and

not separated from personality, we do not remember.

At the same time, the fact that one person has one kind of essence and another another kind is one of the strongest arguments for pre-existence, because essence cannot be born out of nothing – it is too definite. But the system takes man only from birth to death.

Q. Where does the part of us which recurs come from?

A. It is *you*. When we speak about recurrence, we think about our recurrence. Where this part comes from we do not know, and we can spend our whole life on theoretical definitions, but it will not change anything or help our psychological understanding of the idea. I am now trying to establish certain principles which will give us a practical understanding of it. We could find many words, but words will not lead anywhere.

Have you found the answer, why C influences cannot be wasted? Think about that. If you answer this question, you will answer many other questions. And this you do know – put two and two together.

Q. Is it because if such a thing would be liable to recur, again and again you waste it?

A. This is implied, but it is not the answer. Certainly, if it is wasted, and again wasted, what is the use? But there is something you do not see in all this, and yet it is the key to the whole thing. It is very simple, there is nothing mysterious. It is not a puzzle, it is merely a question of thinking.

Try to think like this: take an ordinary school. A boy goes to school and every year begins to learn the same thing. He studies something for a whole year, then goes home and forgets everything, and has to learn the same thing all over again. Again he studies it for a whole year, and again goes home and forgets, and again comes back and learns the same thing. What will they say to him at school? This is why schools are not repeated, why there is no recurrence for schools. And this is what people want, they want to learn the same thing again. But next time you must be in a higher school. If you cannot go to a higher school there will be no other school on this level, because you have already passed it.

Q. Would you meet a school through C influence?

A. School *means* C influence. You meet the school through B influences.

Q. You cannot go into a higher class unless you pass an examination?

A. Quite right, but you can pass the examination and forget everything; it happens very often.

Q. But, to a certain extent, you have learnt how to learn?

A. Sometimes, and sometimes not. You learn how to learn and you learn how to forget.

Q. It seems to me from what you have said that this C influence is transmutation, the power to transmute, and anything less than that is not C influence.

A. Quite right. You are very near, but you can also take C influence simply as a certain amount of knowledge.

Q. Knowledge that can be used?

A. No, that again is a definition. I said knowledge; definitions will not help. It is strange that you do not see it, that you do not catch what it means simply. Transmission of knowledge means C influence, it means a certain work, it does not happen by itself, it means somebody's work, and somebody's work cannot be wasted. If it brings results, it can be continued, but if it brings no result, then naturally it will stop. This explains why the possibility of recurrence must be limited. If one comes to a school and does not profit by being in the school, naturally one cannot come again and again to learn the same thing; one must make something of it. Try to understand it, because without understanding these principles it is impossible to speak about recurrence. All ordinary talks, based on mathematics or anything else, make it too uniform, and recurrence cannot be uniform. You remember we spoke about materiality of knowledge and about the fact that one has very little chance even to begin, because many favourable circumstances are necessary for that. But you must understand that when one begins to get a certain knowledge, chances become smaller and smaller, because if one does

not use it, it will be more and more difficult to get, quite naturally. And the same thing applies to every day, every year, to all our life – this is what must be understood. The idea of recurrence is useful because it refers to *this* life. If we do not do something to-day, how can we expect to do it to-morrow? If we can do it to-day, we must; nobody can put it off till to-morrow, because to-morrow we could do something else. We always think we have time.

Q. Does it mean that if we do not listen to what you say to-day, we will not hear it again?

A. Or maybe you will be here, but I will not be here – how can you know?

Q. Can we only make progress through you?

A. No, you are quite free to find some other place – you are not bound at all. If you know somebody else with whom you can make progress, certainly you must use him. One must not lose any opportunity if one has an opportunity.

Q. I meant – are you the only medium here?

A. No, nobody can be the only one. If you know another way, there is another opportunity, but if you do not know of another opportunity, if you know nobody but me, then you must try to get it from me; if you know somebody else, you can get it from somebody else. Is it quite clear? Only remember one thing – it cannot be a theoretical study, we must learn in practice how to do the most important things for us.

Q. Are opportunities always there, only we are too asleep to notice or use them?

A. Opportunities may be different: there are different degrees. If one has not come to the work, one has the opportunity to accumulate knowledge, material, tendencies. They may be not very strong, but they may all lead in the same direction, or they may lead in opposite directions. Then, in what we call ‘work’, which means influence C or direct knowledge, direct study, opportunities are different, and real opportunities begin only from the moment one uses them.

Q. In the idea of recurrence things happen again. But do schools necessarily appear in the same places? Perhaps in my last recurrence this system never came to England?

A. This is the difficulty about recurrence, because when people hear about it and begin to think, they think in the ordinary formatory, that is, logical way, or very often they think quite illogically, or worse. But even if they think logically, they have not enough material, they do not know enough to think about it. It is necessary to understand first of all that we are speaking about a theory, and secondly, that this theory must be sufficiently full – there must be sufficient material in it. When we think about recurrence, we think that everything repeats, and this is exactly what spoils our approach to it. The first thing to understand about recurrence is that it is not eternal. It sounds absurd, but actually it is so, because it is so different in different cases. Even if we take it theoretically, if we take purely people in mechanical life, even their lives change. Only certain people, in quite frozen conditions of life, have their lives repeating in exactly the same way, maybe for a long time. In other cases, even in ordinary mechanical life, things change. If people are not so definitely governed by circumstances, like great men who have to be great men again and nobody can do anything about it, there are variations, but again not for ever. Never think that anything is for ever. It is a very strange thing, but it seems as though people who have no possibilities, either owing to certain conditions, or to their own insufficient development, or to some pathological state, can have their lives repeating without any particular change, whereas in the case of people with theoretical possibility, their lives can reach certain points at which they either meet with some possibility of development or they begin to go down. It is either one or the other; they cannot go on remaining for ever in the same place, and from the moment they meet with some real possibility, they either recognize the possibility of doing something or they lose it and then go down. Just think about it and perhaps you will be able to formulate some questions.

Q. Does the ability to recognize the possibilities depend on change of being, which can only be achieved after a long period of small efforts?

A. There are two things we must understand about this. Things are in a different relationship to

possibilities: some things, although they have not yet happened and although it may seem to us that they can happen in one way or in another way, are in reality predestined. Nothing can be changed, because such big causes are moving these things that, although they have not yet happened, they can happen only in one way. In relation to some other things the repetition is not so strict. There are many gradations and, side by side with things that can happen only in one way, there may be other things, which are still to come, which can happen this way or that way. It is necessary to understand this as a principle, to understand why things are different and what is different about them. Take to-day. Certain things *have* to happen to-morrow because their causes lie in last year or in ten or twenty years ago. But if the cause of certain things that will happen to-morrow lies in to-day, then they can happen differently to-morrow if something is done differently to-day. So it is a question of the nature of the causes and of where they are. You can look at it like this: suppose you see things going on in exactly the same way for a long time – then you cannot expect a sudden change without some particular reason. Other things may be comparatively new – a certain tendency has just appeared and so it may easily disappear. But if the tendency has been going on in the same direction for a long time it is difficult to see a possibility of change. That is the only way we can discuss it, for we cannot know anything definite about these things. You must remember one principle in relation to this – things are not the same. If you say that some things can be changed and apply it to everything, you will be wrong, because things are never in the same relationship to the possibility of change.

Q. May the possibility of variation in people's recurrences mean that people born in one recurrence might not be born in the next?

A. This is possible only in some cases, but we cannot go into details of this kind. What I want you to understand definitely is that as long as people are quite mechanical, things can repeat and repeat almost indefinitely. But if people become more conscious, or if the possibility of becoming conscious appears, their time becomes limited. They cannot expect an unlimited number of recurrences if they have already begun to know something or to learn something. The more they learn, the shorter becomes their time. People always forget that there is only a very limited number of chances for everybody, so if one loses a possibility in one life, then next life one will lose it more easily. The closer one comes to the possibility of change, the smaller the number of chances becomes, and if one finds a chance and does not use it, one may lose it altogether. It is the same principle as that which applies to one life. You remember, it was said that in the work, in relation to one life, *time is counted*, and the more seriously people work, the more strictly is their time counted. If you want to work for two months and sleep for ten months, it is counted that you worked for twelve months, even though you actually worked for only two. But the requirements or conditions are for twelve months, and the more one works the more those requirements grow. If one works very little, one may remain in the same relation to a certain idea for a year or two years; one may misunderstand something and not lose much through it because there is still a third year. But if a man has already begun to work in earnest he cannot have three years, because every day is an examination and he must pass one examination in order to come to another examination. That must be understood, and the same principle can be applied to recurrence.

Q. Is it that if we are completely mechanical we must recur in exactly the same way, but if we are less mechanical, our recurrences are fewer?

A. It is not exactly like that. As I said, there are many different categories of people. There are people whose lives repeat automatically in exactly the same way. Other people may have different small changes and modifications, all on the same level. Then a third category, to put it very roughly, may have some possibility in the sense that the changes that happen in their lives are not quite aimless, but are nearer and nearer to some B influence. Then the fourth category come nearer to the possibility of meeting a school. The thing to understand is that people are not equal in relation to these possibilities. And, of course, those who have already

found some possibility and have discarded it, prove themselves incapable of development.

Q. I still do not understand why time should be limited for anyone who has worked but not for one who has not?

A. For one who has not begun to awake, time is not counted because it does not exist. Everything repeats, always the same thing, again and again. You can take it like this: knowledge is limited, but since such people do not take any knowledge, for them it is not limited. Then, as I said, you can draw a comparison with an ordinary school: it is not possible always to remain in the same class – one must either make progress or go. Certain demands are made, and if people do not fulfil these demands they may lose the possibility. So if one has begun to work, one must go on. Suppose someone begins to work and then fails. This shows his inability to work, and then what is the meaning of his existence? Try to think about it from this point of view.

Q. Is everyone given access to one of the ways in some cycle or other?

A. I do not know and we cannot know such things; we can speak only about ourselves. *We* have a chance, that is all we know, so we must think about ourselves.

Q. The future in the work seems like walking on a tight-rope. Can one hope to attain another level of stability later?

A. Every state has many different forms, and so has the state of sleep. There may be sleep with possibility of awakening, sleep with less possibility of awakening and sleep without any possibility of awakening.

Q. To have memory of another recurrence is it necessary to change something in essence?

A. No, it is necessary to become conscious in this life. You have only this life. You can say to yourself: 'If I lived before, I do not remember it. This means that if I live again, again I will not remember.' If you become conscious in this life, you will remember, and you will remember as much as you remember now. If you do not remember yourself now, then next time again you will not remember yourself, so it will be the same. The possibility of change starts only with the possibility of beginning to remember yourself *now*. All other things are just words.

Q. If personality dies with us, what effect can attempts to weaken it have in future recurrence?

A. There is no need to be very dogmatic about it; when we speak about recurrence, we speak of 'something' that recurs, and this 'something' keeps in itself traces of all the created tendencies. If the tendency of weakening personality has been created, it will continue; and if the opposite tendency has been created, a tendency to strengthen personality, again it will continue. It is quite right that personality dies, but if this 'something' recurs, then the same causes will produce the same effects. If certain new tendencies have been created, they too will have their effect. So a man who showed a real love of sleep from childhood may fall asleep even earlier.

Q. Then the only thing we can keep is the change, if any, that we make in essence?

A. No, first you must make changes in personality.

Q. But that will not last!

A. It is the only thing we can do. Only very few people can work on essence. It is not exactly an advantage to the people who can, because working on essence is very difficult; but it may happen. Generally we work on personality, and it is the only work we can do. And if we really work it will bring us somewhere. Sometimes tendencies are in essence and sometimes in personality, but I would not formulate it as 'essence' and 'personality'. I would simply say we have to weaken certain tendencies and strengthen others, weaken mechanical tendencies and strengthen conscious tendencies. That is the only formulation possible; everything else would be out of place.

Q. It seems to me that personality, physical body and appearance are too impermanent to recur.

A. Yes, but they were all created by certain causes and, since causes will be the same, they will naturally produce the same effects. One is born in the same circumstances, the same house, from the same parents, and everything will grow the same. There may be some

deviations, but in the end it comes to the same thing. Suppose one is born in a certain town and then one moves out of it for a time. Then, later, one comes back and finds oneself in the same situation as before, as though one had not been away at all. This illustrates what I mean by those deviations. One always returns to the same path.

Q. What is it that wants recurrence so much and yet fears it?

A. That I don't know – it is material for your own study. Certainly, one prefers the idea of recurrence to the ordinary idea of death. At the same time one fears it because, if one is really sincere with oneself, one realizes that things repeat themselves in this life. If one finds oneself, again and again, in the same position, making the same mistakes, one realizes that to be born again will not help if one continues to do the same things now. A change can only be the result of effort; no circumstances can produce a change. This is why all ordinary beliefs in the change of external circumstances never lead anywhere: circumstances may change, but *you* will be the same unless you work. It is the same in recurrence. People's lives may appear completely changed from the point of view of external circumstances, but the result will be the same – the relation of essence to personality will remain. Real change can happen only as a result of schoolwork, or if for several successive lives one only grows the magnetic centre and does not meet a school, then change will be in the growth of magnetic centre.

Q. Do you believe that those who attain a sufficiently high state are not under the obligation of recurring?

A. You go too far. Certain religions begin from the idea of trying to stop this wheel of life. But we cannot speak seriously about it, because, as I said, the idea of recurrence is only a theory, so how can we stop what we are not sure exists? If you want to stop a train, you must know that the train is moving. What would be the point of trying to stop it if you are not sure it is moving?

Q. Is the date of one's death predetermined?

A. I cannot say; there are different theories. I think it is safer to say that it is predetermined from one point of view, only so many things enter into it that one's time can be shortened or prolonged; so although it is predetermined, it is not an absolute predetermination. Or it may be better to say that it changes every moment, although it is predetermined. Every moment can bring new factors and make one's life longer or shorter. If nothing happens, then it is predetermined.

Q. Does school-work affect the length of one's life?

A. Again you expect too much. Maybe after several incarnations you may find means to prolong your life; but if you expect it at once, you expect too much. In some cases it may be true, so I think it must be different in different cases.

Q. Does it mean that I am living the same life again? Was I reborn in 1915 and will I again be born in 1915?

A. Always in 1915 – that is the only thing that cannot change. And certainly we are bound to have lived before – we could not have come out of nothing, only we do not remember. Even those who think they remember something, remember only as children. But in most cases they forget.

The study of recurrence must begin with children's minds, particularly before they begin to talk. If people could remember this time, they would remember very interesting things. Unfortunately, when they begin to talk, they become real children and after six months or a year they usually forget. People very seldom remember what they thought before that, at a very early age. But psychologically it is a fact that in very early memories of childhood – and sometimes people remember things at the age of a few months – they already have a mentality, a certain understanding of people, places and things. How can we expect children that have been born so recently to have all this material? Our mentality grows quite slowly, but some children have a grown-up mind. They are not children at all; then later they become children. If they remember their mentality of early infancy, they see that it is the same

mentality as grown-up people have. That is what is interesting.

Q. Do you know why a child should remember its grown-up mentality and not its previous child's mentality?

A. We have so little material to judge about it. I speak only about the way it can be studied. Suppose we try to remember our own, trying not to let imagination come in; then, if we find something, that would be material. In literature you find very little, because people do not understand how to study it. But in my own experience I met with some very interesting things. Also some people I knew had very interesting recollections of the first years of life, and they all had the same impression, that their mentality was not a child's mentality or a child's psychology. Do you see what I mean? They had a ready mind, with quite grown-up reactions and a way of looking at people and recognizing them, such as could not be formed in the course of six months of unconscious life.

Q. Why should it disappear when a child learns to talk?

A. The child begins to imitate other children and to do exactly what grown-up people expect of him. They expect him to be a stupid child and he becomes a stupid child.

Q. How is it possible to know what a baby remembers? I thought that one was born with one's centres completely blank and that one remembered with centres?

A. That is the strange thing. As I said, some people who do not differ much from other people have strange and quite definite recollections even of their first months. They think they saw people as grown-up people do, not as children. They do not make compound pictures from separate elements, they have quite definite impressions of houses, people and so on.

Q. I still do not see how it is possible to remember a previous recurrence. I thought that memory was dependent on the contents of centres which are in personality. How can personality remember recurrence?

A. You cannot remember it if you do not remember yourself here, in this recurrence. We have lived before; many facts prove that. Why we do not remember is because we did not remember ourselves. The same is true in this life. If things are mechanical, we only remember that they happened; only with self-remembering can we remember details. Personality is always mixed with essence. Memory is in essence, not in personality, but personality can present it quite rightly if memory is sufficiently strong.

Q. If we recur into the same circumstances, there seems very little opportunity of having something different at all in our life.

A. In early life there is. We have a long life and in the course of it we can acquire something – knowledge, understanding – and this understanding can pass into essence. Then, if for the first years of our life we live in essence, this understanding may produce some impression on us, some recollections in essence. As a rule they disappear at a later age, but children sometimes have them for a fairly long time, till the age of eight or ten.

Q. When I was about three or four I used to try and remember myself as a sort of game.

A. It is quite possible; it may have remained. You may have tried to remember yourself in a previous life – I see nothing impossible in that.

Q. In connection with the idea of recurrence, does it mean that if we make a bad mistake it goes on recurring?

A. There may be different mistakes, but if there was something deliberate about this mistake, if you made it because you wished to make it, then most probably you will wish even more to make the same mistake again.

Q. Do things like illnesses recur?

A. They may or may not recur. This is connected with rather complicated things. It is necessary to divide illnesses, for they can belong to different categories. Some illnesses may affect essence, others not. Many contagious diseases open accumulators, so they may actually be useful. Then the accumulators may stay open or they may shut again. Such illnesses may



play the role of shocks. They are accidental illnesses and they may repeat or not repeat. Then there are illnesses belonging to fate, constitutional illnesses.

Q. I do not think I understand eternal recurrence.

A. We speak about possibilities. This is a philosophical conversation; we have not enough material to speak even theoretically. You remember, to speak philosophically means to speak about possibilities. So, if there is recurrence, we speak about the way things *could* happen.

Q. Is one then to consider the whole question as philosophical, or capable of verification?

A. We cannot speak about verification. I think if some people find verification for themselves it will be very subjective. They will not be able to transfer their realization to other people. Other people may or may not believe them, but it will not have the character of proof. But you can verify certain things about recurrence by observing things in this life.

Q. What was the origin of the idea of recurrence?

A. Psychologically, there will be one answer; mathematically, another answer; historically, a third answer. If you mean psychologically, I think it is the very persistent and very definite feeling that children sometimes have that 'it happened before'. For instance, they come to a new house or a new town and have a feeling that all this *has been*. Ordinary psychological explanations by a 'break in consciousness' as it is called and which we can describe much better as passing from one centre to another, are not sufficient, because they explain some cases but do not explain all cases.

Q. Does it mean that the recurrence has occurred during the existence of that town?

A. Yes, certainly. It is not the same line of time; it is parallel time. The idea of recurrence needs two dimensions of time. The need of three dimensions of time comes only with the idea of work. But the second dimension of time is really very elementary. There can be no doubt about its existence, particularly in modern mathematical and physical ideas. If we accept that the line of time is curved, then curvature has two dimensions, so there are two dimensions of time.

Q. I do not understand time being two-dimensional.

A. Take a simple thing. You sail in a boat and you walk on deck while the boat goes along at the same time. This is the second dimension of your movement. You have one movement – you walk yourself, and the second movement is the movement of the boat.

Q. Then a spiral can lead us out of our present circle?

A. I do not think we can speak about spirals from the point of view of the system. But if we do speak about them in relation to recurrence, then in ordinary recurrence there is no spiral at all, it is all on the same level. Recurrences may differ from one another in some details, one may be inclined one way and another more inclined another way – but it is only a small deviation and there is no spiral. The idea of spiral begins with escaping from constant repetition of the same things, or from the moment when something new is introduced.

Q. Is the idea of eternal recurrence part of the system?

A. No, the system can be understood without it, although later some things in the system will be easier to understand if you have some idea of recurrence. The system shows the way to develop but does not say what happens when we do. If we look at the question of survival after death from the point of view of time – only from the point of view of time – it is reasonable to suppose that man 1, 2, 3 and 4 has no life after death, that there is nothing permanent in him. He so lacks permanency that he cannot survive the shock of death. If he has something permanent, he may survive. But in my opinion it is more important to take this question in relation to eternity. This we cannot verify, but looking at it in relation to eternity means that there is repetition. Life has to be repeated, there cannot be only one life. Try to understand the design of life. You cannot understand it if you think of a straight line, and if you think of circles you find that your brain cannot take it in. Everything living – organic life, people and so on – live and die, and in some mysterious way we do not understand this makes circles; these circles are connected with other circles and the whole design of life is the

outcome of it. Every thing, every small unit, turns and turns in its circle, because everything must go on existing. If a gap appeared, the whole structure would be destroyed.

Q. Is it because we lack the necessary category of thinking that we cannot understand recurrence, since it is in eternity?

A. Yes, if you like. *We* cannot visualize it, but our higher centres can. If we work, we shall be able to think about it, but only with the help of higher centres – not with our ordinary brain. But before that we must make sure that our ordinary centres do all they can, because at present we do not use our ordinary centres to their full extent. Before we can expect to go over to higher centres, we must learn to use fully all the parts of ordinary centres instead of only the mechanical parts.

The idea of recurrence may have many quite obvious faults, but mathematically it is right and is certainly better than any other idea of this nature, because otherwise, without the idea of recurrence, there would be no past. If there is no past, there is no present, and if there is no present, where are we? We cannot live in a world where all the present disappears. Long ago, I wrote about that in *Tertium Organum*: if we travel by train we cannot expect all the stations we pass to disappear, and those to which we come to be built anew; they existed before we came and will be there when we have passed. We know that everything dies, so it must be born again; everything is destroyed, so it must be built again; and recurrence is the only theory which can answer.

Q. If every moment is always co-existing, what makes one feel that one is in *this* moment?

A. The limitations of our mind. Certainly the idea of parallel time means eternity of the moment, but our mind cannot think in that way. Our mind is a very limited machine. We must think in the easiest way and make allowances for it. It is easier to think of repetition than of eternal existence of the moment. You must understand that our mind cannot formulate rightly things as they really are; we must have only approximate formulations which are nearer to truth than our ordinary thinking. That is all that is possible. Our mind and our language are very clumsy instruments and we have to deal with very subtle matters and subtle problems. At the same time we do not realize that by simplifying things, by imagining ourselves in a three-dimensional world, we make this world non-existent. We put ourselves in an impossible position, because if we take, for instance, the ordinary view of the past disappearing and the future not yet existent, then nothing exists. This is the only conclusion from this idea that is logically possible: either nothing exists or everything exists – there is no third alternative, so to speak.

Q. Could you say something about whether it is possible to escape from recurrence?

A. You are making the same mistake as do many doctrines. They begin to think about escape before they are sure of the theory. You must first know that recurrence really exists, by remembering, not theoretically. Then you must get tired of it, bored with it. Only then can you think about escape.

Q. How can one be quite sure it exists?

A. As I said, only by remembering. If you remember that you lived before, what it was like, what happened, then you will know. If you do not remember, you cannot be sure. Theory speaks like that: if you remember yourself in one life, you will remember in the next. If you are unconscious in this life, you will not remember. So first you must become conscious in this life.

Q. If one could escape from the law of recurrence, would one still be in the same time or is higher man able to escape into other times?

A. No, time has nothing to do with it. Time refers only to one life. Out of one life time does not exist – that you can call eternity. And what do you mean by escaping? There are many different ways to understand this idea. How can you escape from time? It is part of you; it is the same as escaping from your legs or your head. At the same time the idea of escape has meaning – it means escaping from mechanicalness, being one ‘I’ always, doing what you

want. There are many degrees of escape, but this is the beginning. You take this idea too simply. Try to think about what escape means.

Q. I cannot reconcile the idea that the past is there, really living, with the idea that it comes back again.

A. Do not try to think of it if it is difficult. Leave it. This is why we have to speak about recurrence in simplified forms; our mind cannot think in any other way. This idea is really for higher mental centre which can think rightly. It is almost useless to talk about recurrence, because it becomes philosophy, but there are certain things we can say about it even with our present knowledge, and that is that in relation to school something will remain. Even if one has made a start one will retain something. One cannot forget about it; maybe one will remember earlier and this may help one from one cycle to another, so that if one came to a school once, one may expect to meet a school sooner, which may help. So even by being associated with these ideas we have gained something. In any case we begin with the advantages of the system. This is the only thing that is assured; all the rest depends on our work.

Q. How can recurrence be of advantage to man?

A. If one begins to remember and to change, instead of turning each time in the same circle; if one begins to do what one wants and thinks best, then it is of advantage. But if one does not know about it, or even if one knows and does not do anything, then there is no advantage in it at all. Then it means the same things repeated and repeated.

Things repeat in one life, so just remembering how things happened yesterday you can avoid certain things to-morrow. Everyone lives in a certain closed circle of happenings – to one person one kind of things happen, to another person another kind. You must know your own types of happenings, and when you know them, you can avoid many things.

Q. Having met the system in one recurrence, will one meet it again in the next?

A. It depends what one did with the system. One could meet the system and say: ‘What nonsense these people talk!’ It depends how much effort one makes. If one made efforts one could acquire something, and this may remain, if it was not only in surface personality – if it was not only formatory.

Q. Does one necessarily follow some line of action in each recurrence?

A. As I said, all acquired tendencies are supposed to repeat themselves. One person acquires a tendency to study or be interested in certain things. He will be interested again. Another acquires a tendency to run away from certain things. Then he will run away again.

Q. Do these tendencies grow stronger?

A. They may, or they may grow in a different direction. There is no guarantee – *until* one reaches some conscious action, when one has a certain possibility to trust oneself. If we had enough material we could answer many questions about it. Why, for instance, strange tendencies appear in children, quite opposed to their surrounding circumstances, quite foreign to the people among whom they live. Sometimes they are very strong tendencies that change their life and make them go in totally unexpected ways, when there is nothing in heredity to produce that. This is why it happens in most cases that parents do not understand their children and children do not understand their parents. They never can understand one another sufficiently or rightly. They are quite different people – strangers to one another; they just happened to meet accidentally at a certain station, and then they go in different directions again.

Q. When you say ‘study children’, what do you mean?

A. That is what is so difficult. If you observe tendencies on a big scale, you can find quite unexpected things. You can say about one or another tendency that it is the result of surroundings or find another reason for it, yet quite unexpected tendencies may appear in young children, not the accidental tendencies that appear and disappear, but such as will continue throughout life. According to this theory, these may be tendencies acquired in a previous life in much later years, and then they appear very early.

Q. From the point of view of recurrence, then, may it not be that some important actions we made in a previous life are responsible for our tendencies now?

A. Quite possibly. Only, there is one thing: this work did not exist before. It may be that some other work did – there may be many different kinds – but not this. This work did not exist before, that I am perfectly sure of.

Q. What I meant was that it seems such a huge idea to think that between now and the time we die we make the fatal actions which will give us tendencies for next time.

A. Certainly. Every moment of our lives we may create tendencies we may not be able to get rid of for ten lives. That is why in Indian literature they always emphasize this point. It may be in the form of a fairy tale, but the principle is the same.

Q. You say that this work has not occurred before. Does this mean also that it will not occur again?

A. There is no guarantee. For yourself it will depend on you. Certainly one thing can be certain – it will not happen in the same way. Maybe there will be groups and schools, only not in the same way and not at the same time. Work is the only thing which is not under the law of recurrence, otherwise it would not be work. If it is a little conscious, it cannot recur in the same form. If we take this particular work, many things in it may happen quite differently. For instance, what happened now at a certain time may begin perhaps twenty years earlier.

Q. If schools do not recur in the same way, does it mean that a person can only meet a school in one life?

A. No, that is introducing another idea. It is more simple than that. Recurrence, if it exists, is mechanical and based on mechanicalness. A school cannot be mechanical, so it must be under different laws, even if it is an elementary school. If a school existed once in one form, next time it may be not in the same place, the same time or the same form. How it would change it is impossible to say, but it cannot be the same thing, otherwise it would be mechanical, and if it is mechanical it is not a school.

Q. Then it means that an individual who came across a school might not find it next time?

A. He may find another, maybe a better one, or he may find nothing. The kind of school one could or could not meet next time depends on many unknown reasons, but only quite petrified things can be repeated again and again without change. Things that are alive can never be the same.

You can rely on something like Trafalgar Square recurring, but you cannot rely on schools from the point of view of recurrence.

Q. Then, since schools are not mechanical, if we recur there is no assurance that we should ever find this system again?

A. No assurance, quite right, but there are many sides to it. It is quite true that things do not recur in exactly the same form, but at the same time one cannot lose anything one has acquired. This means that if one loses one possibility one can find another. One can lose only through one's own fault, not through the fault of things, although it is necessary to understand and remember that possibilities are not unlimited. There is recurrence in a sense, at least there *may* be, but, as I said, there can be no 'eternal' recurrence in the literal sense of the word for every thing, whether big or small. There are different manifestations and what we expect to be eternal may not be eternal at all. Everybody has only a limited number of chances. If people live an ordinary life and do not accumulate right influences, do not form a magnetic centre, then after some time they lose even the possibility of forming one. They may die out, because there is big competition. . . . There are many things we do not know about it all, but the first thing that must be understood about recurrence is that it is not eternal.

I see from people's questions that some of them do not realize how very rare the possibility of development is and how many people there are who never come to it. Neither do they realize how many dangers, both external and internal, surround this possibility. As to the

chance of meeting the same school again, I felt that people were even astonished that they might not meet it, that this possibility might not be there for ever. Actually, all that refers to schools is bound to be outside ordinary laws, so that nothing can happen in exactly the same way. That does not mean there will be no other possibilities, but one must be prepared for them. The school cannot run away from one, the only person that can run away is oneself, but one has to be ready to meet it, one must prepare oneself, even if there are ten thousand lives. Nothing comes by itself. If it comes by itself, one will lose it. One can get only as much as one is prepared for, and one can be prepared only by one's own efforts. In this work there are no guarantees. You do not receive degrees for the length of time you stayed in the work. Every day you go through an examination and every day you can either pass or fail.

Q. As it is so rare and difficult to meet with school, I am so afraid one might recur in conditions that would make it impossible.

A. I think there is very little chance of that because, if we take this theory of recurrence, one will be born in the same circumstances, the same time, the same period. Even if for some reason things are not repeated exactly, you will find something else, especially if you remember something of your past life. In any case there will be more chance than if you did not know anything.

Q. Is it true then that none of us had ever met this system before?

A. I think it is quite true. But possibly you met something similar. However, the fact that I think so will not mean anything to you; you must find out for yourself why I think so.

Q. Is there any certainty that if you start work in one life you will be able to continue it afterwards?

A. Again, speaking theoretically, you will begin from the same place where you left off. The more you get now, the easier it will be to begin. It is the same as taking it from one day to another: the relation is the same. For instance, you begin to learn something to-day, and to-morrow you continue – you do not need to begin again from the beginning. But if you only pretend to be learning, if you look at the book and let yourself dream instead, then next time you will have to start from the beginning.

Q. Does change of being this time increase magnetic centre next time?

A. Oh no, magnetic centre must be made in personality, so you will have to make it again next time. You cannot receive it ready made from past life.

Q. Could a tendency in one recurrence become a habit in the next?

A. It depends on the tendency. If it is mechanical, it will become a habit. If it is conscious, it cannot become a habit, because they are two different things.

Q. Thinking back over my life I see certain cross-roads where some decisions were taken which I think were wrong. Is there any particular thing I can do in this recurrence so as not to repeat the same mistakes in the next?

A. To a certain extent; everything is to a certain extent. If we look back we may find moments which we can call cross-roads. If we do not study these, we may make mistakes and take for cross-roads points which were not real cross-roads and so miss real cross-roads. One can think, one can change now as regards those particular points, and if it is sufficiently deep, one will remember; if it is not so deep, one *may* remember. In any case there is a chance that with time one may not do the same thing again, for this question of inevitably turning one way or another way may be more inevitable or less inevitable.

Q. If we can perceive these cross-roads, can we make use of them?

A. There is no question of making use. It is a question of studying them in the past, not in the future. We do not know enough to think about 'doing'. It is only formatory thinking that always starts with the idea of 'doing'.

Q. If we can make any choice, how might that affect recurrence?

A. Recurrence cannot be affected directly. According to the idea of recurrence nothing

changes, only *you* can change. If you change, then many things can change in recurrence. Many ideas and things can pass from one life to another in this way. For instance, someone asked what one could get from the idea of recurrence. If one became intellectually aware of this idea and it became part of one's essence, that is, part of one's general attitude to life, then one would not forget it and it would be an advantage to know it early in the next life.

Q. Is it right to think that we cannot go on living for ever, that is, dying and being born again?

A. Quite right. People with a quite mechanical life have a longer time, and people who become conscious have a shorter time; that is the only difference. It looks very unjust, but at the same time mechanical people can get into very unpleasant circumstances. Suppose that through some external accident connected with historical events, such as wars or something like that, somebody dies very young and continues to die young every time, then only a very exceptional combination of circumstances can introduce a change in his case.

Q. In a case when an accident affects one's whole life, does it recur?

A. Yes, the same kind of accident may repeat itself. You must not forget that we speak only about a theory, but a theory may be better or worse, nearer or further from possible facts.

In mechanical life even things which happen do not bring any practical change. Things are important only when a man begins to awake. From this moment things become serious. So are you asking about mechanical recurrence or about the beginning of awakening?

Q. I had in mind the possibility of meeting a school next time.

A. As I said, schools are more free from recurrence compared with things in life. Many things may be repeated exactly as they are now, and some may change. It is the same as when you go about you see different things: people, trees, buses, cars, houses, lamp-posts; some things stand still and some move. Wars, revolutions and other such things are like lamp-posts, but conscious things are like the light from passing cars. If you go out, you will always see the same lampposts, but you are not likely to see the same cars.

Q. Is it that opportunity never comes twice?

A. Not the same opportunity, it would be waste of time. When people meet with certain opportunities, they become responsible for the energy spent on them. If they do not use it, it does not recur. Lamp-posts stay fixed; cars do not stay, they are not made for standing still but for moving. It is useful to think that the same opportunities may not recur next time. We expect things to be the same, but they may be different. It may depend on other people; other people may begin earlier. For example, I began these lectures in England in 1921, but next time I may begin in 1900. You will be prepared only for 1921, but in 1921 there may no longer be an opportunity for you. This should not be taken literally; it is just an example for thinking about.

Q. It is very difficult to think about preparing for meeting the system earlier.

A. You can prepare nothing. Only remember yourself, then you will remember next time. The whole difficulty lies in negative emotions; we enjoy them so much that we have no interest in anything else.

Q. Is the starting-point in the work the same for everybody, or do we have different starting-points?

A. Very, very different; people begin on different levels. We do not know our history in the sense of past lives. Some people have already done some work, although it is impossible to say in what form. Some people only begin while others have already many efforts behind them, so everybody begins differently. But in school all have to go through the same things and sometimes for people who have more material it is more difficult than for people who have less. Individually it is very different. Some people cannot be responsible for some time, others can. Some can work with new people, others must only listen for a long time.

Q. Is it of practical use to think of events of one's life when trying to self-remember, with a view to fixing them for future recurrence?

A. No, this is not practical. First, as I said many times already, it is necessary to be sure about

future recurrence; and secondly, it is necessary to be sure of remembering yourself. If you put it in the way you did, it will only transform itself into imagination. But if you first try to remember yourself without adding anything to it, and then, when you can, also try to remember your past life – you remember I spoke about trying to find cross-roads – then in combination it will be very useful. Only do not think you can do it yet, because you cannot.

There are many ways of trying to think of your own life in four dimensions. Now we can take it only psychologically, in relation to our own life. Suppose you put yourself back ten years and find that you remember certain moments very well. Then imagine that you know all that will happen, and that you have to live it all over again, knowing it all – live through all the mistakes, all the nonsense and so on. Then you will have a different view of the whole thing. Everything is in you now if you study your life by going backwards and then forward again. By using your imagination you will do it consciously. But you must not try and change anything. Then you will re-live these ten years and see that everything happens in the same way as before, and at the same time you know that everything is to happen in the same way.

Q. How can one remember well enough?

A. It is necessary to find moments you remember well. Some people remember better than others. But for those people who do not remember well it will be specially useful, because all life must be absolutely clear. This is a dissecting-room; only in an ordinary dissecting-room they deal with dead bodies, whereas here you cannot deal with other people until you know everything about yourself.

Q. What do you do when you get to a moment when you forget what happened?

A. There is in us memory of absolutely everything, but it may be what one may call 'frightened'. However, if you insist, then, little by little, things will appear and you will find that you can think of words, moods, feelings and people. This shows that psychology cannot be studied apart from yourself. In study of all your life you have a whole museum before you.

Q. You said a few minutes ago that one went on from where one left off in another life. Does it mean that if you become man No. 4 in this life you will be born No. 4 in the next?

A. That I do not know. I think it is better to say that it will be easier to become No. 4. You see, with a big change of being like that of passing from one degree to another degree, one falls under many new laws. How this works, I do not know. We can speak only about our own situation because *that* we know, and we can say that we can expect comparatively small changes – more knowledge, more consciousness and, with luck, a little more conscience or hunger. But we cannot speak of big changes such as passing from one degree to another. Still, even a slight change is a change, and it is better to think about small changes which we can measure.

You see, in connection with all these questions, it is very useful to realize *what* we can know. These questions are asked as though we could know the answers, but just five minutes of thinking would show that we cannot, because if we could, probably we would have had the answers long ago. In order to answer these questions practically it is necessary to have a better instrument; if we could use this instrument with a bigger range, perhaps we would have concrete answers, but not with the ordinary brain we have now.

Q. I do not understand the connection between change of state and change of circumstances.

A. They are different. Circumstances change by themselves and state changes only as a result of work, and many causes by which the state can change do not depend on circumstances. One must understand how things happen. It is useful to think about these things, but it is easy to make mistakes. One mistake is that we think things could be different. This is true only of ourselves. All causes governing big external events were created long ago, and it is not really our subject – we have no time to study those things in detail. But we must study ourselves in detail.

Q. If a person ceases to be born in his particular period, what happens to all the other lives

with which he is in contact?

A. This is one of the very difficult problems to understand. As far as we can see in this theory, one cannot start being born at once. Being born is also a process like everything else: one fades out little by little, and this fading out does not produce any big effect. Some people can fade out, others have to remain, such as people connected with historical events and things like that. They are in a most unpleasant position, they just turn round and round, and most of them are quite dead.

Q. Is it then impossible for great people in historical movements to escape from life?

A. In most cases it is too late for them to escape; they are dead already, they are almost losing their bones on the way, but they have to continue to exist and turn round. That is one of the mysteries of life – that it is governed by dead people.

Q. I do not see why big historical figures are so important that they must continue to recur even when they become dead? Why wouldn't it be easy to find substitutes for them?

A. Easy for whom? Evidently they fit into some conditions and so continue to go round in the same way even if they die and people take them for living beings. Perhaps it is their chief feature that they are dead, for then they cannot make a mistake – they do exactly the same things over and over again.

Q. You speak of dead people recurring, but I thought essence could not die?

A. It can die relatively, in the sense that it cannot develop. Mechanically it may exist, but it cannot grow, it can only deteriorate with time. Essence can die in many different ways. It may die only for this life or it may die completely. It can die completely only as a result of a long period of wrong actions, actions against conscience. Killing essence means killing conscience. Or it can die in this life and be born again, safe and sane, in the next. For instance, one can fall on one's head and essence may die in the sense that it will not develop any further. But in the next life it will live again. So in speaking about death of essence we must know which case we mean, accidental or intentional.

In thinking about life, we forget that many people are dead and that sleeping people easily fall under the influence of dead people.

Q. Are most people dead?

A. This question was much discussed in our group in St Petersburg. Some thought that most people were dead, but I was always against this. Everybody is asleep, but even in life you find pleasant people who may not work through laziness, lack of opportunity, or something else. But they are not dead.

Q. How can dead people influence sleeping people?

A. In comparison with sleeping people they are very strong, because they have no conscience and no shame. What makes ordinary people weak? Conscience and shame. Besides, if people are asleep, anything can happen to them, they can be stolen out of their beds.

All people in life are asleep, but not all are dead – yet. At the same time, if one cannot accept and use B influence at all, there is nothing to keep one from dying sooner or later. B influences are sent to keep men from dying, even though they are asleep. But if they reject them, there is nothing to prevent their dying. People are not equal in relation to evolution. Some can evolve, others cannot. Either they lost the possibility of evolution or they have done nothing to deserve it.

Q. Is there any difference between clairvoyance and memory of recurrence?

A. Real clairvoyance, apart from fantastic descriptions, is a function of the higher emotional centre, which means a function of man No. 5. Everything below that is either lies or imagination. It is quite possible sometimes to have glimpses of higher centres, but it is not reliable and no one can control it except man No. 5 – and he must be a complete No. 5. If a man crystallizes and becomes almost No. 5, but without having been man No. 4, he is not complete and so he cannot fully use these powers. But if one attains the third state of



consciousness, this development of consciousness means the functioning of the higher emotional centre which has a bigger range of vision than our ordinary vision.

Q. Is it possible to have any understanding of recurrence if one cannot grasp questions of dimensions and different times?

A. I think it is possible to understand, but we must first agree about terms. As a theory it has a psychological, a mathematical and what we may call a physical side, and I think the psychological side can be understood without necessarily understanding the ideas of dimensions and space. After all, what is important is not the mathematical side. It is only a theory of life which is, so to speak, mathematically sound. But we cannot speak about it as a fact.

It can be explained in another way. The idea of recurrence can be connected with the life of humanity. Individual time ends and one becomes connected with the life of a bigger entity – humanity.

It means only one thing: if man remains mechanical, he can recur ten thousand times and will not profit by it. The fact of recurrence does not change anything by itself. But if one begins to work, it becomes enormous; it is the only principle which can explain certain things. But by itself ten thousand lives or one life are just the same.

Q. Do all events in history come again, such as wars and revolutions?

A. We are now speaking about individual recurrence; we cannot pass straight from that to historical events. At the same time we can say that these things will repeat.

They are produced by mechanical forces and mechanical people, so those people will be in the same conditions as before externally. The thing we must understand is that if nothing changes now, nothing will change again. Suppose there are some people who remember; what can they do? Others do not remember, and they are more sure of their opinions and less inclined to listen to reason. And remembering events depends on self-remembering. If you become conscious now, then if there is a next life, you will remember what happened. If you do not remember yourselves, how can you remember things and events?

Q. Does it mean that the situation of world events will always be the same for me?

A. You must understand that each world, from the point of view of recurrence, is within another world. The situation can change in one of the bigger worlds and affect the world inside it. There are many things in relation to this that our mind is incapable of thinking about in the right way. If we could think more definitely and clearly, we would see more.

There is one thing I want to add in relation to worlds. As long as the Absolute exists, all other things must exist; they have no right to die. Even if they die, they are repeated and repeated as long as the Absolute exists.

But all this is theory. In the system recurrence is not necessary. It may be interesting and useful; you can even start with this idea, but for actual work on yourself it is not necessary. This is why we are not given this idea in the system. It came from outside, from me, from literature. It does fit, it does not contradict the system, but it is not needed because all we can do we can do only in this life. If we do nothing in this life, the next life will be just the same, or there will be slight variations but no positive change. If recurrence exists, we cannot change it. There is only one thing we can change: we can try to awake and hope to remain awake. If we have to come back, we cannot stop it. We are in a train, the train is going somewhere. All we can do is to pass the time in the train differently – do something useful or spend it quite uselessly.

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