Chapter One

I RETURNED to Russia in November, 1914, that is, at the beginning of the first world war, after a rather long journey through Egypt, Ceylon, and India. The war had found me in Colombo and from there I went back through England.

When leaving Petersburg at the start of my journey I had said that I was going to "seek the miraculous." The "miraculous" is very difficult to define. But for me this word had a quite definite meaning. I had come to the conclusion a long time ago that there was no escape from the labyrinth of contradictions in which we live except by an entirely new road, unlike anything hitherto known or used by us. But where this new or forgotten road began I was unable to say. I already knew then as an undoubted fact that beyond the thin film of false reality there existed another reality from which, for some reason, something separated us. The "miraculous" was a penetration into this unknown reality. And it seemed to me that the way to the unknown could be found in the East. Why in the East? It was difficult to answer this. In this idea there was, perhaps, something of romance, but it may have been the absolutely real conviction that, in any case, nothing could be found in Europe.

On the return journey, and during the several weeks I spent in London, everything I had thought about the results of my search was thrown into confusion by the wild absurdity of the war and by all the emotions which filled the air, conversation, and newspapers, and which, against my will, often affected me.

But when I returned to Russia, and again experienced all those thoughts with which I had gone away, I felt that my search, and everything connected with it, was more important than anything that was happening or could happen in a world of "obvious absurdities."[1] I said to myself

[1] That refers to a little book I had as a child. The book was called *Obvious Absurdities*, it belonged to Stupin's "Little Library" and consisted of such pictures as, for instance, a man carrying a house on his back, a carriage with square wheels, and similar things. This book impressed me very much at that time, because there were many pictures in it about which I could not understand what was absurd in them. They looked exactly like ordinary things in life. And later I began to think that the book really gave pictures of real life, because when I continued to grow I became more and more convinced that all life consisted of "obvious absurdities." Later experiences only strengthened this conviction.

then that the war must be looked upon as one of those generally catastrophic conditions of life in the midst of which we have to live and work, and seek answers to our questions and doubts. The *war*, the great European war, in the possibility of which I had not wanted to believe and the reality of which I did not for a long time wish to acknowledge, had become a fact. *We were in it* and I saw that it must be taken as a great *memento mori* showing that hurry was necessary and that it was impossible to believe in "life" which led nowhere.

The war could not touch me personally, at any rate not until the final catastrophe which seemed to me inevitable for Russia, and perhaps for the whole of Europe, but not yet imminent. Though then, of course, the approaching catastrophe looked only temporary and no one had as yet conceived all the disintegration and destruction, both inner and outer, in which we should have to live in the future.

Summing up the total of my impressions of the East and particularly of India, I had to admit that, on my return, my problem seemed even more difficult and complicated than on my departure. India and the East had not only not lost their glamour of the miraculous; on the contrary, this glamour had acquired new shades that were absent from it before. I saw clearly that something could be found there which had long since ceased to exist in Europe and I considered that the direction I had taken was the right one. But, at the same time, I was convinced that the secret was better and more deeply hidden than I could previously have supposed.

When I went away I already knew I was going to look for a *school* or *schools*. I had arrived at this long ago. I realized that personal, individual efforts were insufficient and that it was necessary to come into touch with the real and living thought which must be in existence somewhere but with which we had lost contact.

This I understood; but the idea of schools itself changed very much during my travels and in one way became simpler and more concrete and in another way became more cold and distant. I want to say that schools lost much of their fairy-tale character.

On my departure I still admitted much that was fantastic in relation to schools. "Admitted" is perhaps too strong a word. I should say better that I dreamed about the possibility of a non-physical contact with schools, a contact, so to speak, "on another plane." I could not explain it clearly, but it seemed to me that even the beginning of contact with a school may have a *miraculous nature*. I imagined, for example, the possibility of making contact with schools of the distant past, with schools of Pythagoras, with schools of Egypt, with the schools of those who built Notre-Dame, and so on. It seemed to me that the barriers of time and space should disappear on making such contact. The idea of schools in itself was fantastic and nothing seemed to me too fantastic in relation to this idea. And I saw no contradiction between these ideas and my attempts

to find schools in India. It seemed to me that it was precisely in India that it would be possible to establish some kind of contact which would afterwards become permanent and independent of any outside interferences.

On the return voyage, after a whole series of meetings and impressions, the idea of schools became much more real and tangible and lost its fantastic character. This probably took place chiefly because, as I then realized, "school" required not only a search but "selection," or choice—I mean on our side.

That schools existed I did not doubt. But at the same time I became convinced that the schools I heard about and with which I could have come into contact were not for me. They were schools of either a frankly religious nature or of a half-religious character, but definitely devotional in tone. These schools did not attract me, chiefly because if I had been seeking a religious way I could have found it in Russia. Other schools were of a slightly sentimental moral-philosophical type with a shade of asceticism, like the schools of the disciples or followers of Ramakrishna; there were nice people connected with these schools, but I did not feel they had real knowledge. Others which are usually described as "yogi schools" and which are based on the creation of trance states had, in my eyes, something of the nature of "spiritualism." I could not trust them; all their achievements were either self-deception or what the Orthodox mystics (I mean in Russian monastic literature) called "beauty," or allurement.

There was another type of school, with which I was unable to make contact and of which I only heard. These schools promised very much but they also demanded very much. *They demanded everything at once.* It would have been necessary to stay in India and give up thoughts of returning to Europe, to renounce all my own ideas, aims, and plans, and proceed along a road of which I could know nothing beforehand.

These schools interested me very much and the people who had been in touch with them, and who told me about them, stood out distinctly from the common type. But still, it seemed to me that there ought to be schools of a more rational kind and that a man had the right, up to a certain point, to know where he was going.

Simultaneously with this I came to the conclusion that whatever the name of the school: occult, esoteric, or yogi, they should exist on the ordinary earthly plane like any other kind of school: a school of painting, a school of dancing, a school of medicine. I realized that thought of schools "on another plane" was simply a sign of weakness, of dreams taking the place of real search. And I understood then that these dreams were one of the principal obstacles on our possible way to the miraculous.

On the way to India I made plans for further travels. This time I

wanted to begin with the Mohammedan East: chiefly Russian Central Asia and Persia. But nothing of this was destined to materialize.

From London, through Norway, Sweden, and Finland, I arrived in Petersburg, already renamed "Petrograd" and full of speculation and patriotism. Soon afterwards I went to Moscow and began editorial work for the newspaper to which I had written from India. I stayed there about six weeks, but during that time a little episode occurred which was connected with many things that happened later.

One day in the office of the newspaper I found, while preparing for the next issue, a notice (in, I think, *The Voice of Moscow*) referring to the scenario of a ballet, "The Struggle of the Magicians," which belonged, as it said, to a certain "Hindu." The action of the ballet was to take place in India and give a complete picture of Oriental magic including fakir miracles, sacred dances, and so on. I did not like the excessively jaunty tone of the paragraph, but as Hindu writers of ballet scenarios were, to a certain extent, rare in Moscow, I cut it out and put it into my paper, with the slight addition that there would be everything in the ballet that cannot be found in real India but which travelers go there to see.

Soon after this, for various reasons, I left the paper and went to Petersburg.

There, in February and March, 1915, I gave public lectures on my travels in India. The titles of these lectures were "In Search of the Miraculous" and "The Problems of Death." In these lectures, which were to serve as an introduction to a book on my travels it was my intention to write, I said that in India the "miraculous" was not sought where it ought to be sought, that all ordinary ways were useless, and that India guarded her secrets better than many people supposed; but that the "miraculous" did exist there and was indicated by many things which people passed by without realizing their hidden sense and meaning or without knowing how to approach them. I again had "schools" in mind.

In spite of the war my lectures evoked very considerable interest. There were more than a thousand people at each in the Alexandrovsky Hall of the Petersburg Town Duma. I received many letters; people came to see me; and I felt that on the basis of a "search for the miraculous" it would be possible to unite together a very large number of people who were no longer able to swallow the customary forms of lying and living in lying.

After Easter I went to give these lectures in Moscow. Among people whom I met during these lectures there were two, one a musician and the other a sculptor, who very soon began to speak to me about a group in Moscow which was engaged in various "occult" investigations and experiments and directed by a certain G., a Caucasian Greek, the very "Hindu," so I understood, to whom belonged the ballet scenario mentioned in the newspaper I had come across three or four months before this. I must confess that what these two people told me about this group and what took place in it: all sorts of self-suggested wonders, interested me very little. I had heard tales exactly like this many times before and I had formed a definite opinion concerning them.

Ladies who suddenly see "eyes" in their rooms which float in the air and fascinate them and which they follow from street to street and at the end arrive at the house of a certain Oriental to whom the eyes belong. Or people who, in the presence of the same Oriental, suddenly feel he is looking right through them, seeing all their feelings, thoughts, and desires; and they have a strange sensation in their legs and cannot move, and then fall into his power to such an extent that he can make them do everything he desires, even from a distance. All this and many other stories of the same sort had always seemed to me to be simply bad fiction. People invent miracles for themselves and invent exactly what is expected from them. It is a mixture of superstition, self-suggestion, and defective thinking, and, according to my observation, these stories never appear without a certain collaboration on the part of the men to whom they refer.

So that, in the light of previous experience, it was only after the persistent efforts of one of my new acquaintances, M., that I agreed to meet G. and have a talk with him.

My first meeting with him entirely changed my opinion of him and of what I might expect from him.

I remember this meeting very well. We arrived at a small café in a noisy though not central street. I saw a man of an oriental type, no longer young, with a black mustache and piercing eyes, who astonished me first of all because he seemed to be disguised and completely out of keeping with the place and its atmosphere. I was still full of impressions of the East. And this man with the face of an Indian raja or an Arab sheik whom I at once seemed to see in a white burnoose or a gilded turban, seated here in this little café, where small dealers and commission agents met together, in a black overcoat with a velvet collar and a black bowler hat, produced the strange, unexpected, and almost alarming impression of a man poorly disguised, the sight of whom embarrasses you because you see he is not what he pretends to be and yet you have to speak and behave as though you did not see it. He spoke Russian incorrectly with a strong Caucasian accent; and this accent, with which we are accustomed to associate anything apart from philosophical ideas, strengthened still further the strangeness and the unexpectedness of this impression.

I do not remember how our talk began; I think we spoke of India, of esotericism, and of yogi schools. I gathered that G. had traveled widely and had been in places of which I had only heard and which I very much wished to visit. Not only did my questions not embarrass him but it

seemed to me that he put much more into each answer than I had asked for. I liked his manner of speaking, which was careful and precise. M. soon left us. G. told me of his work in Moscow. I did not fully understand him. It transpired from what he said that in his work, which was chiefly psychological in character, *chemistry* played a big part. Listening to him for the first time I, of course, took his words literally.

"What you say," I said, "reminds me of something I heard about a school in southern India. A Brahmin, an exceptional man in many respects, told a young Englishman in Travancore of a school which studied the chemistry of the human body, and by means of introducing or removing various substances, could change a man's moral and psychological nature. This is very much like what you are saying."

"It may be so," said G., "but, at the same time, it may be quite different. There are schools which appear to make use of similar methods but understand them quite differently. A similarity of methods or even of ideas proves nothing."

"There is another question that interests me very much," I said. "There are substances which yogis take to induce certain states. Might these not be, in certain cases, narcotics? I have myself carried out a number of experiments in this direction and everything I have read about magic proves to me quite clearly that all schools at all times and in all countries have made a very wide use of narcotics for the creation of those states which make 'magic' possible."

"Yes," said G. "In many cases these substances are those which you call 'narcotics.' But they can be used in entirely different ways. There are schools which make use of narcotics in the right way. People in these schools take them for self-study; in order to take a look ahead, to know their possibilities better, to see beforehand, 'in advance,' what can be attained later on as the result of prolonged work. When a man sees this and is convinced that what he has learned theoretically really exists, he then works consciously, he knows where he is going. Sometimes this is the easiest way of being convinced of the real existence of those possibilities which man often suspects in himself. There is a special chemistry relating to this. There are particular substances for each function. Each function can either be strengthened or weakened, awakened or put to sleep. But to do this a great knowledge of the human machine and of this special chemistry is necessary. In all those schools which make use of this method experiments are carried out only when they are really necessary and only under the direction of experienced and competent men who can foresee all results and adopt measures against possible undesirable consequences. The substances used in these schools are not merely 'narcotics' as you call them, although many of them are prepared from such drugs as opium, hashish, and so on. Besides schools in which such experiments are carried out, there are other schools which use these or

similar substances, not for experiment or study but to attain definite desired results, if only for a short time. Through a skillful use of such substances a man can be made very clever or very strong, for a certain time. Afterwards, of course, he dies or goes mad, but this is not taken into consideration. Such schools also exist. So you see that we must speak very cautiously about schools. They may do practically the same things but the results will be totally different."

I was deeply interested in everything G. said. I felt in it some new points of view, unlike any I had met with before.

He invited me to go with him to a house where some of his pupils were to forgather.

We took a carriage and went in the direction of Sokolniki.

On the way G. told me how the war had interfered with many of his plans; many of his pupils had gone with the first mobilization; very expensive apparatus and instruments ordered from abroad had been lost. Then he spoke of the heavy expenditure connected with his work, of the expensive apartments he had taken, and to which, I gathered, we were going. He said, further, that his work interested a number of well-known people in Moscow—"professors" and "artists," as he expressed it. But when I asked him who, precisely, they were, he did not give me a single name.

"I ask," I said, "because I am a native of Moscow; and, besides, I have worked on newspapers here for ten years so that I know more or less everybody."

G. said nothing to this.

We came to a large empty flat over a municipal school, evidently belonging to teachers of this school. I think it was in the place of the former Red Pond.

There were several of G.'s pupils in the flat: three or four young men and two ladies both of whom looked like schoolmistresses. I had been in such flats before. Even the absence of furniture confirmed my idea, since municipal schoolmistresses were not given furniture. With this thought it somehow became strange to look at G. Why had he told me that tale about the enormous expenditure connected with this flat? In the first place the flat was not his, in the second place it was rent free, and thirdly it could not have cost more than ten pounds a month. There was something so singular in this obvious bluff that I thought at that time it must mean something.

It is difficult for me to reconstruct the beginning of the conversation with G.'s pupils. Some of the things I heard surprised me. I tried to discover in what their work consisted, but they gave me no direct answers, insisting in some cases on a strange and, to me, unintelligible terminology.

They suggested reading the beginning of a story written, so they told me, by one of G.'s pupils, who was not in Moscow at the time.

Naturally, I agreed to this; and one of them began to read aloud from a manuscript. The author described his meeting and acquaintance with G. My attention was attracted by the fact that the story began with the author coming across the same notice of the ballet, "The Struggle of the Magicians," which I myself had seen in *The Voice of Moscow*, in the winter. Further—this pleased me very much because I expected it—at the first meeting the author certainly felt that G. put him as it were on the palm of his hand, weighed him, and put him back. The story was called "Glimpses of Truth" and was evidently written by a man without any literary experience. But in spite of this it produced an impression, because it contained indications of a system in which I felt something very interesting though I could neither name nor formulate it to myself, and some very strange and unexpected ideas about art which found in me a very strong response.

I learned later on that the author of the story was an imaginary person and that the story had been begun by two of G.'s pupils who were present at the reading, with the object of giving an exposition of his ideas in a literary form. Still later I heard that the idea of the story belonged to G. himself.

The reading of what constituted the first chapter stopped at this point. G. listened attentively the whole time. He sat on a sofa, with one leg tucked beneath him, drinking black coffee from a tumbler, smoking and sometimes glancing at me. I liked his movements, which had a great deal of a kind of feline grace and assurance; even in his silence there was something which distinguished him from others. I felt that I would rather have met him, not in Moscow, not in this flat, but in one of those places from which I had so recently returned, in the court of one of the Cairo mosques, in one of the ruined cities of Ceylon, or in one of the South Indian temples—Tanjore, Trichinopoly, or Madura.

"Well, how do you like the story?" asked G. after a short silence when the reading had ended.

I told him I had found it interesting to listen to, but that, from my point of view, it had the defect of not making clear what exactly it was all about. The story spoke of a very strong impression produced upon the author by a doctrine he had met with, but it gave no adequate idea of the doctrine itself. Those who were present began to argue with me, pointing out that I had missed the most important part of it. G. himself said nothing.

When I asked what was the system they were studying and what were its distinguishing features, I was answered very indefinitely. Then they spoke of "work on oneself," but in what this work consisted they failed to explain. On the whole my conversation with G.'s pupils did not go very well and I felt something calculated and artificial in them as though they were playing a part learned beforehand. Besides, the pupils did not

match with the teacher. They all belonged to that particular layer of Moscow rather poor "intelligentsia" which I knew very well and from which I could not expect anything interesting. I even thought that it was very strange to meet them on the way to the miraculous. At the same time they all seemed to me quite nice and decent people. The stories I had heard from M. obviously did not come from them and did not refer to them.

"There is one thing I wanted to ask you," said G. after a pause. "Could this article be published in a paper? We thought that we could acquaint the public in this way with our ideas."

"It is quite impossible," I said. "This is not an article, that is, not anything having a beginning and an end; it is the beginning of a story and it is too long for a newspaper. You see we count material by lines. The reading occupied two hours—it is about three thousand lines. You know what we call a feuilleton in a paper—an ordinary feuilleton is about three hundred lines. So this part of the story will take ten feuilletons. In Moscow papers a feuilleton with continuation is never printed more than once a week, so it will take ten weeks—and it is a conversation of one night. If it can be published it is only in a monthly magazine, but I don't know any one suitable for this now. And in this case they will ask for the whole story, before they say anything."

G. did not say anything and the conversation stopped at that.

But in G. himself I at once felt something uncommon; and in the course of the evening this impression only strengthened. When I was taking leave of him the thought flashed into my mind that I must *at once, without delay*, arrange to meet him again, and that if I did not do so I might lose all connection with him. I asked him if I could not see him once more before my departure to Petersburg. He told me that he would be at the same café the following day, at the same time.

I came out with one of the young men. I felt myself very strange—a long reading which I very little understood, people who did not answer my questions, G. himself with his unusual manners and his influence on his people, which I all the time felt produced in me an unexpected desire to laugh, to shout, to sing, as though I had escaped from school or from some strange detention.

I wanted to tell my impressions to this young man, make some jokes about G., and about the rather tedious and pretentious story. I at once imagined myself telling all this to some of my friends. Happily I stopped myself in time. —"But he will go and telephone them at once. They are all friends."

So I tried to keep myself in hand, and quite silently we came to the tram and rode towards the center of Moscow. After rather a long journey we arrived at Okhotny Nad, near which place I stayed, and silently said good-by to one another, and parted.

I was at the same café where I had met G. the next day, and the day following, and every day afterwards. During the week I spent in Moscow I saw G. every day. It very soon became clear to me that he knew very much of what I wanted to know. Among other things he explained to me certain phenomena I had come across in India which no one had been able to explain to me either there, on the spot, or afterwards. In his explanations I felt the assurance of a specialist, a very fine analysis of facts, and a *system* which I could not grasp, but the presence of which I already felt because G.'s explanations made me think not only of the facts under discussion, but also of many other things I had observed or conjectured.

I did not meet G.'s group again. About himself G. spoke but little. Once or twice he mentioned his travels in the East. I was interested to know where he had been but this I was unable to make out exactly.

In regard to his work in Moscow G. said that he had two groups unconnected with one another and occupied in different work, "according to the state of their preparation and their powers," as he expressed it. Each member of these groups paid a thousand roubles a year, and was able to work with him while pursuing his ordinary activities in life.

I said that in my opinion a thousand roubles a year might be too large a payment for many people without private means.

G. replied that no other arrangement was possible, because, owing to the very nature of the work, he could not have many pupils. At the same time, he did not desire and *ought not*—he emphasized this—to spend his own money on the organization of the work. His work was not, and could not be, of a charitable nature and his pupils themselves ought to find the means for the hire of apartments where they could meet; for carrying out experiments; and so on. Besides this, he added that observation showed that people who were weak in life proved themselves weak in the work.

"There are several aspects of this idea," said G. "The work of each person may involve expenses, traveling, and so on. If his life is so badly organized that a thousand roubles embarrasses him it would be better for him not to undertake this work. Suppose that, in the course of the year, his work requires him to go to Cairo or some other place. He must have the means to do so. Through our demand we find out whether he is able to work with us or not.

"Besides," G. continued, "I have far too little spare time to be able to sacrifice it on others without being certain even that it will do them good. I value my time very much because I need it for my own work and because I cannot and, as I said before, do not want to spend it unproductively. There is also another side to this," said G. "People do not value a thing if they do not pay for it."

I listened to this with a strange feeling. On the one hand I was pleased with everything that G. said. I was attracted by the absence of any

element of sentimentality, of conventional talk about "altruism," of words about "working for the good of humanity" and so forth. On the other hand I was surprised at G.'s apparent desire to *convince* me of something in connection with the question of money *when I needed no convincing.*

If there was anything I did not agree with it was simply that G. would be able to collect enough money in the way he described. I realized that none of those pupils whom I had seen would be able to pay a thousand roubles a year. If he had really found in the East visible and tangible traces of hidden knowledge and was continuing investigations in this direction, then it was clear that this work needed funds, like any other scientific enterprise, like an expedition into some unknown part of the world, the excavation of an ancient city, or an investigation requiring elaborate and numerous physical or chemical experiments. It was quite unnecessary to convince me of this. On the contrary, the thought was already in my mind that if G. gave me the possibility of a closer acquaintance with his activities, I should probably be able to find the funds necessary for him to place his work on a proper footing and also bring him more prepared people. But, of course, I still had only a very vague idea in what this work might consist.

Without saying it plainly, G. gave me to understand that he would accept me as one of his pupils if I expressed the wish. I told him that the chief obstacle on my side was that, at the moment, I could not stay in Moscow because I had made an arrangement with a publisher in Petersburg and was preparing several books for publication. G. told me that he sometimes went to Petersburg and he promised to come there soon and let me know of his arrival.

"But if I joined your group," I said to G., "I should be faced with a very difficult problem. I do not know whether you exact a promise from your pupils to keep secret what they learn from you, but I could give no such promise. There have been two occasions in my life when I had the possibility of joining groups engaged in work which appears to be similar to yours, at any rate by description, and which interested me very much at the time. But in both cases to join would have meant consenting or promising to keep secret everything that I might learn there. And I refused in both cases, because, before everything else, I am a writer, and I desire to be absolutely free and to decide for myself what I shall write and what I shall not write. If I promise to keep secret something I am told, it would be very difficult afterwards to separate what had been told me from what came to my own mind either in connection with it or even with no connection. For instance, I know very little about your ideas yet, but I do know that when we begin to talk we shall very soon come to questions of time and space, of higher dimensions, and so on. These are questions on which I have already been working for many

years. I have no doubt whatever that they must occupy a large place in your system." G. nodded. "Well, you see, if we were now to talk under a pledge of secrecy, then, after the first conversation I should not know what I could write and what I could not write."

"But what are your own ideas on the subject?" said G. "One must not talk too much. There are things which are said only for disciples."

"I could accept such a condition only temporarily," I said. "Of course it would be ludicrous if I began at once to write about what I learn from you. But if, in principle, you do not wish to make a secret of your ideas and care only that they should not be transmitted in a distorted form, then I could accept such a condition and wait until I had a better understanding of your teaching. I once came across a group of people who were engaged in various scientific experiments on a very wide scale. They made no secret of their work. But they made it a condition that no one would have the right to speak of or describe any experiment unless he was able to carry it out himself. Until he was able to repeat the experiment himself he had to keep silent."

"There could be no better formulation," said G., "and if you will keep such a rule this question will never arise between us."

"Are there any conditions for joining your group?" I asked. "And is a man who joins it tied to it and to you? In other words, I want to know if he is free to go and leave your work, or does he take definite obligations upon himself? And how do you act towards him if he does not carry out his obligations?"

"There are no conditions of any kind," said G., "and there cannot be any. Our starting point is that man does not know himself, that he *is not*" (he emphasized these words), "that is, he is not what he can and what he should be. For this reason he cannot make any agreements or assume any obligations. He can decide nothing in regard to the future. Today he is one person and tomorrow another. He is in no way bound to us and if he likes he can at any time leave the work and go. There are no obligations of any kind either in our relationship to him or in his to us.

"If he likes he can study. He will have to study for a long time, and work a great deal on himself. When he has learned enough, then it is a different matter. He will see for himself whether he likes our work or not. If he wishes he can work with us; if not he may go away. Up to that moment he is free. If he stays after that he will be able to decide or make arrangements for the future.

"For instance, take one point. A situation may arise, not, of course, in the beginning but later on, when a man has to preserve secrecy, even if only for a time, about something he has learned. But can a man who does not know himself promise to keep a secret? Of course he can promise to do so, but can he keep his promise? For he is not one, there are many different people in him. *One in him* promises, and believes that

he wants to keep the secret. But tomorrow *another in him* will tell it to his wife, or to a friend over a bottle of wine, or a clever man may question him in such a way that he himself will not notice that he is letting out everything. Finally, he may be hypnotized, or he may be shouted at unexpectedly and frightened, and he will do anything you like. What sort of obligations can he take upon himself? No, with such a man we will not talk seriously. To be able to keep a secret a man must *know himself* and he must *be*. And a man such as all men are is very far from this.

"Sometimes we make temporary conditions with people *as a test*. Usually they are broken very soon but we never give any serious secret to a man we don't trust so it does no matter much. I mean it matters nothing to us although it certainly breaks our connection with this man and he loses his chance to learn anything from us, if there is anything to learn from us. Also it may affect all his personal friends, although they may not expect it."

I remember that in one of my talks with G., during this first week of my acquaintance with him, I spoke of my intention of going again to the East.

"Is it worth thinking about it? And can I find what I want there?" I asked G.

"It is good to go for a rest, for a holiday," said G., "but it is not worth while going there for what you want. All that can be found here."

I understood that he was speaking of work with him.

"But do not schools which are on the spot, so to speak, in the midst of all the traditions, offer certain advantages?" I asked.

In answering this question G. told me several things which I did not understand till later.

"Even if you found schools you would find only 'philosophical' schools," he said. "In India there are only 'philosophical' schools. It was divided up in that way long ago; in India there was 'philosophy,' in Egypt 'theory,' and in present-day Persia, Mesopotamia, and Turkestan—'practice.'"

"And does it remain the same now?" I asked.

"In part even now," he said. "But you do not clearly understand what I mean by 'philosophy,' 'theory,' and 'practice.' These words must be understood in a different way, not in the way they are usually understood.

"But speaking of schools, there are only *special* schools; there are no general schools. Every teacher, or *guru*, is a specialist in some one thing. One is an astronomer, another a sculptor, a third a musician. And all the pupils of each teacher must first of all study the subject in which he has specialized, then, afterwards, another subject, and so on. It would take a thousand years to study everything."

"But how did you study?"

"I was not alone. There were all kinds of specialists among us. Everyone

studied on the lines of his particular subject. Afterwards, when we for-gathered, we put together everything we had found."

"And where are your companions now?"

G. was silent for a time, and then said slowly, looking into the distance: "Some have died, some are working, some have gone into seclusion."

This word from the monastic language, heard so unexpectedly, gave me a strange and uncomfortable feeling.

At the same time I felt a certain "acting" on G.'s part, as though he were deliberately trying from time to time to throw me a word that would interest me and make me think in a definite direction.

When I tried to ask him more definitely where he had found what he knew, what the source of his knowledge was, and how far this knowledge went, he did not give me a direct answer.

"You know," G. said once, "when you went to India they wrote about your journey and your aims in the papers. I gave my pupils the task of reading your books, of determining by them *what you were*, and of establishing on this basis what you would be able to find. So we knew what you would find while you were still on your way there."

With this the talk came to an end.

I once asked G. about the ballet which had been mentioned in the papers and referred to in the story "Glimpses of Truth" and whether this ballet would have the nature of a "mystery play."

"My ballet is not a 'mystery,'" said G. "The object I had in view was to produce an interesting and beautiful spectacle. Of course there is a certain meaning hidden beneath the outward form, but I have not pursued the aim of exposing and emphasizing this meaning. An important place in the ballet is occupied by certain dances. I will explain this to you briefly. Imagine that in the study of the movements of the heavenly bodies, let us say the planets of the solar system, a special mechanism is constructed to give a visual representation of the laws of these movements and to remind us of them. In this mechanism each planet, which is represented by a sphere of appropriate size, is placed at a certain distance from a central sphere representing the sun. The mechanism is set in motion and all the spheres begin to rotate and to move along prescribed paths, reproducing in a visual form the laws which govern the movements of the planets. This mechanism reminds you of all you know about the solar system. There is something like this in the rhythm of certain dances. In the strictly defined movements and combinations of the dancers, certain laws are visually reproduced which are intelligible to those who know them. Such dances are called 'sacred dances.' In the course of my travels in the East I have many times witnessed such dances being performed during sacred services in various ancient temples. Some of these dances are reproduced in 'The Struggle of the Magicians.' More-

over there are three ideas lying at the basis of 'The Struggle of the Magicians.' But if I produce the ballet on the ordinary stage the public will never understand these ideas."

I understood from what he said subsequently that this would not be a ballet in the strict meaning of the word, but a series of dramatic and mimic scenes held together by a common plot, accompanied by music and intermixed with songs and dances. The most appropriate name for these scenes would be "revue," but without any comic element. The "ballet" or "revue" was to be called "The Struggle of the Magicians." The important scenes represented the schools of a "Black Magician" and a "White Magician," with exercises by pupils of both schools and a struggle between the two schools. The action was to take place against the background of the life of an Eastern city, intermixed with sacred dances, Dervish dances, and various national Eastern dances, all this interwoven with a love story which itself would have an allegorical meaning.

I was particularly interested when G. said that *the same* performers would have to act and dance in the "White Magician" scene and in the "Black Magician" scene; and that they themselves and their movements had to be attractive and beautiful in the first scene and ugly and discordant in the second.

"You understand that in this way they will see and study all sides of themselves; consequently the ballet will be of immense importance for self-study," said G.

I understood this far from clearly at the time, but I was struck by a certain discrepancy.

"In the notice I saw in the paper it was said that your 'ballet' would be staged in Moscow and that certain well-known ballet dancers would take part in it. How do you reconcile this with the idea of self-study?" I asked. "They will not play and dance in order to study themselves."

"All this is far from being decided," said G. "And the author of the notice you read was not fully informed. All this may be quite different. Although, on the other hand, those taking part in the ballet will see themselves whether they like it or not."

"And who is writing the music?" I asked.

"That also is not decided," said G. He did not say anything more, and I only came across the "ballet" again five years later.

Once I was talking with G. in Moscow. I was speaking about London, where I had been staying a short while before, about the terrifying mechanization that was being developed in the big European cities and without which it was probably impossible to live and work in those immense whirling "mechanical toys."

"People are turning into machines," I said. "And no doubt sometimes they become perfect machines. But I do not believe they can think. If they tried to think, they could not have been such fine machines."

"Yes," said G., "that is true, but only partly true. It depends first of all on the question *which* mind they use for their work. If they use the proper mind they will be able to think even better in the midst of all their work with machines. But, again, only if they think with the proper mind."

I did not understand what G. meant by "proper mind" and understood it only much later.

"And secondly," he continued, "the mechanization you speak of is not at all dangerous. A man may be a *man*" (he emphasized this word), "while working with machines. There is another kind of mechanization which is much more dangerous: being a machine oneself. Have you ever thought about the fact that all peoples *themselves* are machines?"

"Yes," I said, "from the strictly scientific point of view all people are machines governed by external influences. But the question is, can the scientific point of view be wholly accepted?"

"Scientific or not scientific is all the same to me," said G. "I want you to understand what I am saying. Look, all those people you see," he pointed along the street, "are simply machines—nothing more."

"I think I understand what you mean," I said. "And I have often thought how little there is in the world that can stand against this form of mechanization and choose its own path."

"This is just where you make your greatest mistake," said G. "You think there is something that chooses its own path, something that can stand against mechanization; you think that not everything is equally mechanical."

"Why, of course not!" I said. "Art, poetry, thought, are phenomena of quite a different order."

"Of exactly the same order," said G. "These activities are just as mechanical as everything else. Men are machines and nothing but mechanical actions can be expected of machines."

"Very well," I said. "But are there no people who are not machines?"

"It may be that there are," said G., "only not those people you see. And you do not know them. That is what I want you to understand."

I thought it rather strange that he should be so insistent on this point. What he said seemed to me obvious and incontestable. At the same time, I had never liked such short and all-embracing metaphors. They always omitted points of *difference*. I, on the other hand, had always maintained differences were the most important thing and that in order to understand things it was first necessary to see the points in which they differed. So I felt that it was odd that G. insisted on an idea which seemed

to be obvious provided it were not made too absolute and exceptions were admitted.

"People are so unlike one another," I said. "I do not think it would be possible to bring them all under the same heading. There are savages, there are mechanized people, there are intellectual people, there are geniuses."

"Quite right," said G., "people are very unlike one another, but the real difference between people you do not know and cannot see. The difference of which you speak simply does not exist. This must be understood. All the people you see, all the people you know, all the people *you may get to know*, are machines, actual machines working solely under the power of external influences, as you yourself said. Machines they are born and machines they die. How do savages and intellectuals come into this? Even now, at this very moment, while we are talking, several millions of machines are trying to annihilate one another. What is the difference between them? Where are the savages and where are the intellectuals? They are all alike . . .

"But there is a possibility of ceasing to be a machine. It is of this we must think and not about the different kinds of machines that exist. Of course there are different machines; a motorcar is a machine, a gramophone is a machine, and a gun is a machine. But what of it? It is the same thing—they are all machines."

In connection with this conversation I remember another.

"What is your opinion of modern psychology?" I once asked G. with the intention of introducing the subject of psychoanalysis which I had mistrusted from the time when it had first appeared. But G. did not let me get as far as that.

"Before speaking of psychology we must be clear to whom it refers and to whom it does not refer," he said. "*Psychology* refers to people, to men, to human beings. What *psychology*" (he emphasized the word) "can there be in relation to machines? Mechanics, not psychology, is necessary for the study of machines. That is why we begin with mechanics. It is a very long way yet to psychology."

"Can one stop being a machine?" I asked.

"Ah! That is the question," said G. "If you had asked such questions more often we might, perhaps, have got somewhere in our talks. It is possible to stop being a machine, but for that it is necessary first of all *to know the machine*. A machine, a real machine, does not know itself and cannot know itself. When a machine knows itself it is then no longer a machine, at least, not such a machine as it was before. It already begins to be *responsible* for its actions."

"This means, according to you, that a man is not responsible for his actions?" I asked.

"A *man*" (he emphasized this word) "is responsible. A *machine* is not responsible."

In the course of one of our talks I asked G.:

"What, in your opinion, is the best preparation for the study of your method? For instance, is it useful to study what is called 'occult' or 'mystical' literature?"

In saying this I had in mind more particularly the "Tarot" and the literature on the "Tarot."

"Yes," said G. "A great deal can be found by reading. For instance, take yourself: you might already know a great deal if you *knew how to read*. I mean that, if you *understood* everything you have read in your life, you would already know what you are looking for now. If you understood everything you have written in your own book, what is it called?"—he made something altogether impossible out of the words "Tertium Organum"—"I should come and bow down to you and beg you to teach me. But *you do not understand* either what you read or what you write. You do not even understand what the word 'understand' means. Yet understanding is essential, and reading can be useful only if you understand what you read. But, of course, no book can give real preparation. So it is impossible to say which is better. What a man knows *well*" (he emphasized the word "well")—"that is his preparation. If a man knows how to make coffee well or how to make boots well, then it is already possible to talk to him. The trouble is that nobody knows anything well. Everything is known just anyhow, superficially."

This was another of those unexpected turns which G. gave to his explanations. G.'s words, in addition to their ordinary meaning, undoubtedly contained another, altogether different, meaning. I had already begun to realize that, in order to arrive at this hidden meaning in G.'s words, one had to begin with their usual and simple meaning. G.'s words were always significant in their ordinary sense, although this was not the whole of their significance. The wider or deeper significance remained hidden for a long time.

There is another talk which has remained in my memory.

I asked G. what a man had to do to assimilate this teaching.

"What *to do?*" asked G. as though surprised. "It is impossible *to do* anything. A man must first of all *understand* certain things. He has thousands of false ideas and false conceptions, chiefly about himself, and he must get rid of some of them before beginning to acquire anything new. Otherwise the new will be built on a wrong foundation and the result will be worse than before."

"How can one get rid of false ideas?" I asked. "We depend on the forms of our perception. False ideas are produced by the forms of our perception."

G. shook his head.

"Again you speak of something different," he said. "You speak of errors arising from perceptions but I am not speaking of these. Within the limits of given perceptions man can err more or err less. As I have said before, man's chief delusion is his conviction that he can *do*. All people think that they can do, all people want to do, and the first question all people ask is what they are to do. But actually nobody does anything and nobody can do anything. This is the first thing that must be understood. *Everything happens*. All that befalls a man, all that is done by him, all that comes from him—*all this happens*. And it happens in exactly the same way as rain falls as a result of a change in the temperature in the higher regions of the atmosphere or the surrounding clouds, as snow melts under the rays of the sun, as dust rises with the wind.

"Man is a machine. All his deeds, actions, words, thoughts, feelings, convictions, opinions, and habits are the results of external influences, external impressions. Out of himself a man cannot produce a single thought, a single action. Everything he says, does, thinks, feels—all this happens. Man cannot discover anything, invent anything. It all happens.

"To establish this fact for oneself, to understand it, to be convinced of its truth, means getting rid of a thousand illusions about man, about his being creative and consciously organizing his own life, and so on. There is nothing of this kind. Everything happens—popular movements, wars, revolutions, changes of government, all this happens. And it happens in exactly the same way as everything happens in the life of individual man. Man is born, lives, dies, builds houses, writes books, not as he wants to, but as it happens. Everything happens. Man does not love, hate, desire—all this happens.

"But no one will ever believe you if you tell him he can do nothing. This is the most offensive and the most unpleasant thing you can tell people. It is particularly unpleasant and offensive because it is the truth, and nobody wants to know the truth.

"When you understand this it will be easier for us to talk. But it is one thing to understand with the mind and another thing to feel it with one's 'whole mass,' to be really convinced that it is so and never forget it.

"With this question of *doing*" (G. emphasized the word), "yet another thing is connected. It always seems to people that others invariably do things wrongly, not in the way they should be done. Everybody always thinks he could do it better. They do not understand, and do not want to understand, that what is being done, and particularly what *has already been done* in one way, cannot be, and could not have been, done in another way. Have you noticed how everyone now is talking about the war? Everyone has his own plan, his own theory. Everyone finds that nothing is being done in the way it ought to be done. Actually everything is being done in the only way it can be done. If *one* thing could be dif-

ferent *everything* could be different. And then perhaps there would have been no war.

"Try to understand what I am saying: everything is dependent on everything else, everything is connected, nothing is separate. Therefore everything is going in the only way it can go. If people were different everything would be different. They are what they are, so everything is as it is."

This was very difficult to swallow.

"Is there nothing, absolutely nothing, that can be done?" I asked.

"Absolutely nothing."

"And can *nobody* do anything?"

"That is another question. In order *to do* it is necessary *to be*. And it is necessary first to understand what *to be* means. If we continue our talks you will see that we use a special language and that, in order to talk with us, it is necessary to learn this language. It is not worth while talking in ordinary language because, in that language, it is impossible to understand one another. This also, at the moment, seems strange to you. But it is true. In order to understand it is necessary to learn another language. In the language which people speak they cannot understand one another. You will see later on why this is so.

"Then one must learn to speak the truth. This also appears strange to you. You do not realize that one has to learn to speak the truth. It seems to you that it is enough to wish or to decide to do so. And I tell you that people comparatively rarely tell a deliberate lie. In most cases they think they speak the truth. And yet they lie all the time, both when they wish to lie and when they wish to speak the truth. They lie all the time, both to themselves and to others. Therefore nobody ever understands either himself or anyone else. Think—could there be such discord, such deep misunderstanding, and such hatred towards the views and opinions of others, if people were able to understand one another? But they cannot understand because they cannot help lying. To speak the truth is the most difficult thing in the world; and one must study a great deal and for a long time in order to be able to speak the truth. The wish alone is not enough. *To speak the truth one must know what the truth is and what a lie is, and first of all in oneself.* And this nobody wants to know."

Talks with G., and the unexpected turn he gave to every idea, interested me more and more every day. But I had to go to Petersburg.

I remember my last talk with him.

I had thanked him for the consideration he had given me and for his explanations which, I already saw, had changed many things for me.

"But all the same, you know, the most important thing is *facts*," I said. "If I could see genuine and real facts of a new and unknown character, only they would finally convince me that I am on the right way."

I was again thinking of "miracles."

"*There will be facts*," said G. "I promise you. But many other things are necessary first."

I did not understand his last words then, I only understood them later when I really came up against "facts," for G. kept his word. But this was not until about a year and a half later, in August, 1916.

Of the last talks in Moscow there is still another which remains in my memory during which G. said several things which, again, became intelligible only subsequently.

He was talking about a man I had met while with him, and he spoke of his relations with certain people.

"He is a weak man," said G. "People take advantage of him, unconsciously of course. And all because he *considers* them. If he did not *consider* them, everything would be different, and they themselves would be different."

It seemed odd to me that a man should not consider others.

"What do you mean by the word 'consider'?" I asked. "I both understand you and do not understand you. This word has a great many different meanings."

"Precisely the contrary," said G. "There is only one meaning. Try to think about this."

Later on I understood what G. called "considering," and realized what an enormous place it occupies in life and how much it gives rise to. G. called "considering" that attitude which creates inner slavery, inner dependence. Afterwards we had occasion to speak a great deal about this.

I remember another talk about the war. We were sitting in the Philipov's Café on the Tverskaya. It was very full of people and very noisy. War and profiteering had created an unpleasant, feverish atmosphere. I had even refused to go there. G. insisted and as always with him I gave way. I had already realized by then that he sometimes purposely created difficult conditions for conversation, as though demanding of me some sort of extra effort and a readiness to reconcile myself to unpleasant and uncomfortable surroundings *for the sake of talking with him.*

But this time the result was not particularly brilliant because, owing to the noise, the most interesting part of what he was saying failed to reach me. At first I understood what G. was saying. But the thread gradually began to slip away from me. After several attempts to follow his remarks, of which only isolated words reached me, I gave up listening and simply observed *how he spoke.*

The conversation began with my question: "Can war be stopped?" And G. answered: "*Yes, it can.*" And yet I had been certain from previous talks that he would answer: "*No, it cannot.*"

"But the whole thing is: how?" he said. "It is necessary to know a

great deal in order to understand that. What is war? *It is the result of planetary influences.* Somewhere up there two or three planets have approached too near to each other; tension results. Have you noticed how, if a man passes quite close to you on a narrow pavement, you become all tense? The same tension takes place between planets. For them it lasts, perhaps, a second or two. But here, on the earth, people begin to slaughter one another, and they go on slaughtering maybe for several years. It seems to them at the time that they hate one another; or perhaps that they have to slaughter each other for some exalted purpose; or that they must defend somebody or something and that it is a very noble thing to do; or something else of the same kind. They fail to realize to what an extent they are mere pawns in the game. They think they signify something; they think they can move about as they like; they think they can decide to do this or that. But in reality all their movements, all their actions, are the result of planetary influences. And they themselves signify literally nothing. Then the moon plays a big part in this. But we will speak about the moon separately. Only it must be understood that neither Emperor Wilhelm, nor generals, nor ministers, nor parliaments, signify anything or can do anything. Everything that happens on a big scale is governed from outside, and governed either by accidental combinations of influences or by general cosmic laws."

This was all I heard. Only much later I understood what he wished to tell me—that is, how accidental influences could be diverted or transformed into something relatively harmless. It was really an interesting idea referring to the esoteric meaning of "sacrifices." But, in any case at the present time, this idea has only an historical and a psychological value. What was really important and what he said quite casually, so that I did not even notice it at once, and only remembered later in trying to reconstruct the conversation, was his words referring to the difference of time for planets and for man.

And even when I remembered it, for a long time I did not realize the full meaning of this idea. Later very much was based on it.

Somewhere about this time I was very much struck by a talk about the *sun*, the *planets*, and the *moon*. I do not remember how this talk began. But I remember that G. drew a small diagram and tried to explain what he called the "correlation of forces in different worlds." This was in connection with the previous talk, that is, in connection with the influences acting on humanity. The idea was roughly this: humanity, or more correctly, *organic life on earth*, is acted upon simultaneously by influences proceeding from various sources and different worlds: influences from the planets, influences from the moon, influences from the sun, influences from the stars. All these influences act simultaneously; one

influence predominates at one moment and another influence at another moment. And for man there is a certain possibility of making a *choice of influences*; in other words, of passing from one influence to another.

"To explain *how*, would need a very long talk," said G. "So we will talk about this some other time. At this moment I want you to understand one thing: it is impossible to become free from one influence without becoming subject to another. The whole thing, all work on oneself, consists in choosing the influence to which you wish to subject yourself, and actually falling under this influence. And for this it is necessary to know beforehand which influence is the more profitable."

What interested me in this talk was that G. spoke of the planets and the moon as *living beings*, having definite ages, a definite period of life and possibilities of development and transition to other planes of being. From what he said it appeared that the moon was not a "dead planet," as is usually accepted, but, on the contrary, a "planet in birth"; a planet at the very initial stages of its development which had not yet reached "the degree of intelligence possessed by the earth," as he expressed it.

"But the moon is growing and developing," said G., "and some time, it will, possibly, attain the same level as the earth. Then, near it, a new moon will appear and the earth will become their sun. At one time the sun was like the earth and the earth like the moon. And earlier still the sun was like the moon."

This attracted my attention at once. Nothing had ever seemed to me more artificial, unreliable, and dogmatic than all the usual theories of the origin of planets and solar systems, beginning with the Kant-Laplace theory down to the very latest, with all their additions and variations. The "general public" considers these theories, or at any rate the last one known to it, to be scientific and proven. But in actual fact there is of course nothing less scientific and less proven than these theories. Therefore the fact that G.'s system accepted an altogether different theory, an *organic* theory having its origin in entirely new principles and showing a different universal order, appeared to me very interesting and important.

"In what relation does the intelligence of the earth stand to the intelligence of the sun?" I asked.

"The intelligence of the sun is divine," said G. "But the earth can become the same; only, of course, it is not guaranteed and the earth may die having attained nothing."

"Upon what does this depend?" I asked.

G.'s answer was very vague.

"There is a definite period," he said, "for a certain thing to be done. If, by a certain time, what ought to be done has not been done, the earth may perish without having attained what it could have attained."

"Is this period known?" I asked.

"It is known," said G. "But it would be no advantage whatever for people to know it. It would even be worse. Some would believe it, others would not believe it, yet others would demand proofs. Afterwards they would begin to break one another's heads. Everything ends this way with people."

In Moscow, at the same time, we also had several interesting talks about art. These were connected with the story which was read on the first evening that I saw G.

"At the moment it is not yet clear to you," G. once said, "that people living on the earth can belong to very different levels, although in appearance they look exactly the same. Just as there are very different levels of men, so there are different levels of art. Only you do not realize at present that the difference between these levels is far greater than you might suppose. You take different things on one level, far too near one another, and you think these different levels are accessible to you.

"I do not call art all that you call art, which is simply mechanical reproduction, imitation of nature or other people, or simply fantasy, or an attempt to be original. Real art is something quite different. Among works of art, especially works of ancient art, you meet with many things you cannot explain and which contain a certain something you do not feel in modern works of art. But as you do not realize what this difference is you very soon forget it and continue to take everything as one kind of art. And yet there is an enormous difference between your art and the art of which I speak. In your art everything is subjective—the artist's perception of this or that sensation; the forms in which he tries to express his sensations and the perception of these forms by other people. In one and the same phenomenon one artist may feel one thing and another artist quite a different thing. One and the same sunset may evoke a feeling of joy in one artist and sadness in another. Two artists may strive to express exactly the same perceptions by entirely different methods, in different forms; or entirely different perceptions in the same forms—according to how they were taught, or contrary to it. And the spectators, listeners, or readers will perceive, not what the artist wished to convey or what he felt, but what the forms in which he expresses his sensations will make them feel by association. Everything is subjective and everything is accidental, that is to say, based on accidental associations—the impression of the artist and his *'creation'* " (he emphasized the word "creation"), "the perceptions of the spectators, listeners, or readers.

"In real art there is nothing accidental. It is mathematics. Everything in it can be calculated, everything can be known beforehand. The artist *knows* and *understands* what he wants to convey and his work cannot produce one impression on one man and another impression on another, presuming, of course, people on one level. It will always, and with mathematical certainty, produce one and the same impression.

"At the same time the same work of art will produce different impressions on people of different levels. And people of lower levels will never receive from it what people of higher levels receive. This is real, *objective* art. Imagine some scientific work—a book on astronomy or chemistry. It is impossible that one person should understand it in one way and another in another way. Everyone who is sufficiently prepared and who is able to read this book will understand what the author means, and precisely as the author means it. An objective work of art is just such a book, except that it affects the emotional and not only the intellectual side of man."

"Do such works of objective art exist at the present day?" I asked.

"Of course they exist," answered G. "The great Sphinx in Egypt is such a work of art, as well as some historically known works of architecture, certain statues of gods, and many other things. There are figures of gods and of various mythological beings that can be read like books, only not with the mind but with the emotions, provided they are sufficiently developed. In the course of our travels in Central Asia we found, in the desert at the foot of the Hindu Kush, a strange figure which we thought at first was some ancient god or devil. At first it produced upon us simply the impression of being a curiosity. But after a while we began to *feel* that this figure contained many things, a big, complete, and complex system of cosmology. And slowly, step by step, we began to decipher this system. It was in the body of the figure, in its legs, in its arms, in its head, in its eyes, in its ears; everywhere. In the whole statue there was nothing accidental, nothing without meaning. And gradually we understood the aim of the people who built this statue. We began to feel their thoughts, their feelings. Some of us thought that we saw their faces, heard their voices. At all events, we grasped the meaning of what they wanted to convey to us across thousands of years, and not only the meaning, but all the feelings and the emotions connected with it as well. That indeed was art!"

I was very interested in what G. said about art. His *principle* of the division of art into subjective and objective told me a great deal. I still did not understand everything he put into these words. I had always felt in art certain divisions and gradations which I could neither define nor formulate, and which nobody else had formulated. Nevertheless I knew that these divisions and gradations existed. So that all discussions about art without the recognition of these divisions and gradations seemed to me empty and useless, simply arguments about words. In what G. had said, in his indications of the different levels which we fail to see and

understand, I felt an approach to the very gradations that I had felt but could not define.

In general, many things which G. said astonished me. There were ideas which I could not accept and which appeared to me fantastic and without foundation. Other things, on the contrary, coincided strangely with what I had thought myself and with what I had arrived at long ago. I was most of all interested in the *connectedness* of everything he said. I already felt that his ideas were not detached one from another, as all philosophical and scientific ideas are, but made one whole, of which, as yet, I saw only some of the pieces.

I thought about that in the night train, on the way from Moscow to Petersburg. I asked myself whether I had indeed found what I was looking for. Was it possible that G. actually *knew* what had to be known in order to proceed from words or ideas to deeds, to "facts"? I was still not certain of anything, nor could I formulate anything precisely. But I had an inner conviction that something had already changed for me and that now everything would go differently.

Chapter Two

IN PETERSBURG the summer passed with the usual literary work. I was preparing my books for new editions, reading proofs, and so on. This was the terrible summer of 1915 with its gradually lowering atmosphere, from which, in spite of all efforts, I could not free myself. The war was now being waged on Russian territory and was coming nearer to us. Everything was beginning to totter. The hidden suicidal activity which has determined so much in Russian life was becoming more and more apparent. A "trial of strength" was in progress. Printers were perpetually going on strike. My work was held up. And I was already beginning to think that the catastrophe would be upon us before I succeeded in doing what I intended. But my thoughts very often returned to the Moscow talks. Several times when things became particularly difficult I remember I said to myself, "I will give up everything and go to G. in Moscow." And at this thought I always felt easier.

Time passed. One day, it was already autumn, I was called to the telephone and heard G.'s voice. He had come to Petersburg for a few days. I went to see him at once and, in between conversations with other people who came to see him on various matters, he spoke to me just as he had in Moscow.

When he was leaving next day he told me he would soon be coming back again. And on this second visit, when I told him about a certain group I went to in Petersburg, where all possible subjects were discussed, from war to psychology, he said that acquaintance with similar groups might be useful, as he was thinking of starting the same kind of work in Petersburg as he was conducting in Moscow.

He went to Moscow and promised to return in a fortnight. I spoke of him to some of my friends and we began to await his arrival.

He returned again for a short time. I succeeded, however, in introducing some people to him. In regard to his plans and intentions, he said he wanted to organize his work on a larger scale, give public lectures, arrange a series of experiments and demonstrations, and attract to his work people with a wider and more varied preparation. All this reminded me of a part of what I had heard in Moscow. But I did not clearly understand

what "experiments" and "demonstrations" he spoke of; this became clear only later.

I remember one talk—as usual with G.—in a small café on the Nevsky.

G. told me in some detail about the organization of groups for his work and about their role in that work. Once or twice he used the word "esoteric," which I had not heard from him before, and I was interested in what he meant by it. But when I tried to stop and ask what he meant by the word "esoteric" he avoided an answer.

"This is not important; well—call it what you like," he said. "That is not the point; the point is that a 'group' is the beginning of everything. One man can do nothing, can attain nothing. A group with a real leader can do more. A group of people can do what one man can never do.

"You do not realize your own situation. You are in prison. All you can wish for, if you are a sensible man, is to escape. But how escape? It is necessary to tunnel under a wall. One man can do nothing. But let us suppose there are ten or twenty men—if they work in turn and if one covers another they can complete the tunnel and escape.

"Furthermore, no one can escape from prison without the help of those *who have escaped before*. Only they can say in what way escape is possible or can send tools, files, or whatever may be necessary. But *one* prisoner alone cannot find these people or get into touch with them. An organization is necessary. Nothing can be achieved without an organization."

G. often returned afterwards to this example of "prison" and "escape from prison" in his talks. Sometimes he began with it, and then his favorite statement was that, if a man in prison was at any time to have a chance of escape, then he must first of all *realize that he is in prison*. So long as he fails to realize this, so long as he thinks he is free, he has no chance whatever. No one can help or liberate him by force, against his will, in opposition to his wishes. If liberation is possible, it is possible only as a result of great labor and great efforts, and, above all, of conscious efforts, towards a definite aim.

Gradually I introduced a greater and greater number of people to G. And every time he came to Petersburg I arranged talks and lectures, in which he took part, either at some private houses or with some already existing groups. Thirty or forty people used to come. After January, 1916, G. began to visit Petersburg regularly every fortnight, sometimes with some of his Moscow pupils.

I did not understand everything about the way these meetings were arranged. It seemed to me that G. was making much of it unnecessarily difficult. For instance, he seldom allowed me to fix a meeting beforehand. A former meeting usually ended with the announcement that G. was returning to Moscow the following day. On the following morning he would say that he had decided to stay till the evening. The whole day was passed in cafés where people came who wanted to see G. It was only in the evening, an hour or an hour and a half before we usually began our meetings, that he would say to me:

"Why not have a meeting tonight? Ring up those who wanted to come and tell them we shall be at such and such a place."

I used to rush to the telephone but, of course, at seven or half-past seven in the evening, everybody was already engaged and I could only collect a few people. And some who lived outside Petersburg, in Tsarskoye, etc., never succeeded in coming to our meetings.

A great deal I afterwards understood differently from the way I did then. And G.'s chief motives became clearer to me. He by no means wanted to make it *easy* for people to become acquainted with his ideas. On the contrary he considered that only by overcoming difficulties, however irrelevant and accidental, could people value his ideas.

"People do not value what is easily come by," he said. "And if a man has already felt something, believe me, he will sit waiting all day at the telephone in case he should be invited. Or he will himself ring up and ask and inquire. And whoever expects to be asked, and asked beforehand so that he can arrange his own affairs, let him go on expecting. Of course, for those who are not in Petersburg this is certainly difficult. But we cannot help it. Later on, perhaps, we shall have definite meetings on fixed days. At present it is impossible to do this. People must show themselves and their valuation of what they have heard."

All this and much else besides still remained for me at that time half-open to question.

But the lectures and, in general, all that G. said at that time, both at the meetings and outside them, interested me more and more.

On one occasion, at one of these meetings, someone asked about the possibility of reincarnation, and whether it was possible to believe in cases of communication with the dead.

"Many things are possible," said G. "But it is necessary to understand that man's being, both in life and after death, if it does exist after death, may be very different in quality. The 'man-machine' with whom everything depends upon external influences, with whom everything happens, who is now one, the next moment another, and the next moment a third, has no future of any kind; he is buried and that is all. *Dust returns to dust.* This applies to him. In order to be able to speak of any kind of future life there must be a certain crystallization, a certain fusion of man's inner qualities, a certain independence of external influences. If there is anything in a man able to resist external influences, then this very thing itself may also be able to resist the death of the physical body. But think for yourselves what there is to withstand physical death in a man who faints

or forgets everything when he cuts his finger? If there is anything in a man, it may survive; if there is nothing, then there is nothing to survive. But even if something survives, its future can be very varied. In certain cases of fuller crystallization what people call 'reincarnation' may be possible after death, and, in other cases, what people call 'existence on the other side.' In both cases it is the continuation of life in the 'astral body,' or with the help of the 'astral body.' You know what the expression 'astral body' means. But the systems with which you are acquainted and which use this expression state that *all men* have an 'astral body.' This is quite wrong. What may be called the 'astral body' is obtained by means of fusion, that is, by means of terribly hard inner work and struggle. Man is not born with it. And only very few men acquire an 'astral body.' If it is formed it may continue to live after the death of the physical body, and it may be born again in another physical body. This is 'reincarnation.' If it is not re-born, then, in the course of time, it also dies; it is not immortal but it can live long after the death of the physical body.

"Fusion, inner unity, is obtained by means of 'friction,' by the struggle between 'yes' and 'no' in man. If a man lives without inner struggle, if everything happens in him without opposition, if he goes wherever he is drawn or wherever the wind blows, he will remain such as he is. But if a struggle begins in him, and particularly if there is a definite line in this struggle, then, gradually, permanent traits begin to form themselves, he begins to 'crystallize.' But crystallization is possible on a right foundation and it is possible on a wrong foundation. 'Friction,' the struggle between 'yes' and 'no,' can easily take place on a wrong foundation. For instance, a fanatical belief in some or other idea, or the 'fear of sin,' can evoke a terribly intense struggle between 'yes' and 'no,' and a man may crystallize on these foundations. But this would be a wrong, incomplete crystallization. Such a man will not possess the possibility of further development. In order to make further development possible he must be melted down again, and this can be accomplished only through terrible suffering.

"Crystallization is possible on any foundation. Take for example a brigand, a really good, genuine brigand. I knew such brigands in the Caucasus. He will stand with a rifle behind a stone by the roadside for eight hours without stirring. Could you do this? All the time, mind you, a struggle is going on in him. He is thirsty and hot, and flies are biting him; but he stands still. Another is a monk; he is afraid of the devil; all night long he beats his head on the floor and prays. Thus crystallization is achieved. In such ways people can generate in themselves an enormous inner strength; they can endure torture; they can get what they want. This means that there is now in them something solid, something permanent. Such people can become immortal. But what is the good of it? A man of this kind becomes an 'immortal thing,' although a certain amount

of consciousness is sometimes preserved in him. But even this, it must be remembered, occurs very rarely."

I recollect that the talks which followed that evening struck me by the fact that many people heard something entirely different to what G. said; others only paid attention to G.'s secondary and nonessential remarks and remembered only these. The fundamental principles in what G. said escaped most of them. Only very few asked questions on the essential things he said. One of these questions has remained in my memory.

"In what way can one evoke the struggle between 'yes' and 'no' in oneself?" someone asked.

"Sacrifice is necessary," said G. "If nothing is sacrificed nothing is obtained. And it is necessary to sacrifice something precious at the moment, to sacrifice for a long time and to sacrifice a great deal. *But still, not forever.* This must be understood because often it is not understood. Sacrifice is necessary only while the process of crystallization is going on. When crystallization is achieved, renunciations, privations, and sacrifices are no longer necessary. Then a man may have everything he wants. There are no longer any laws for him, he is a law unto himself."

From among those who came to our lectures a small group of people was gradually formed who did not miss a single opportunity of listening to G. and who met together in his absence. This was the beginning of the first Petersburg group.

During that time I was a good deal with G. and began to understand him better. One was struck by a great inner simplicity and naturalness in him which made one completely forget that he was, for us, the representative of the world of the miraculous and the unknown. Furthermore, one felt very strongly in him the entire absence of any kind of affectation or desire to produce an impression. And together with this one felt an absence of personal interest in anything he was doing, a complete indifference to ease and comfort and a capacity for not sparing himself in work whatever that work might be. Sometimes he liked to be in gay and lively company; he liked to arrange big dinners, buying a quantity of wine and food of which however he often ate or drank practically nothing. Many people got the impression that he was a gourmand, a man fond of good living in general, and it seemed to us that he often *wanted* to create this impression, although all of us already saw that this was "acting."

Our feeling of this "acting" in G. was exceptionally strong. Among ourselves we often said we never saw him and never would. In any other man so much "acting" would have produced an impression of falsity. In him "acting" produced an impression of strength, although, as I have already mentioned, not always; sometimes there was too much of it.

I was particularly attracted by his sense of humor and the complete

absence of any pretensions to "sanctity" or to the possession of "miraculous" powers, although, as we became convinced later, he possessed then the knowledge and ability of creating unusual phenomena of a psychological character. But he always laughed at people who expected miracles from him.

He was an extraordinarily versatile man; he knew everything and could do everything. He once told me he had brought back from his travels in the East a number of carpets among which were many duplicates and others having no particular value from an artistic point of view. During his visits he had found that the price of carpets in Petersburg was higher than in Moscow, and every time he came he brought a bale of carpets which he sold in Petersburg.

According to another version he simply bought the carpets in Moscow at the "Tolkutchka" and brought them to Petersburg to sell.

I did not altogether understand why he did this, but I felt it was connected with the idea of "acting."

The sale of these carpets was in itself remarkable. G. put an advertisement in the papers and all kinds of people came to buy carpets. On such occasions they took him, of course, for an ordinary Caucasian carpet-seller. I often sat for hours watching him as he talked to the people who came. I saw that he sometimes played on their weak side.

One day he was either in a hurry or had grown tired of acting the carpet-seller and he offered a lady, obviously rich but very grasping, who had selected a dozen fine carpets and was bargaining desperately, all the carpets in the room for about a quarter of the price of those she had chosen. At first she was surprised but then she began to bargain again. G. smiled and said he would think it over and give her his answer the next day. But next day he was no longer in Petersburg and the woman got nothing at all.

Something of this sort happened on nearly every occasion. With these carpets, in the role of traveling merchant, he again gave the impression of a man in disguise, a kind of Haroun-al-Raschid, or the man in the invisible cap of the fairy tale.

Once, when I was not there, an "occultist" of the charlatan type came to him, who played a certain part in some spiritualistic circles in Petersburg and who later became a "professor" under the bolsheviks. He began by saying he had heard a great deal about G. and his knowledge and wanted to make his acquaintance.

G., as he told me himself, played the part of a genuine carpet-seller. With the strongest Caucasian accent and in broken Russian he began to assure the "occultist" that he was mistaken and that he only sold carpets; and he immediately began to unroll and offer him some.

The "occultist" went away fully convinced he had been hoaxed by his friends.

"It was obvious that the rascal had not got a farthing," added G., "otherwise I would have screwed the price of a pair of carpets out of him."

A Persian used to come to him to mend carpets. One day I noticed that G. was very attentively watching how the Persian was doing his work.

"I want to understand how he does it and I don't understand yet," said G. "Do you see that hook he has? The whole thing is in that. I wanted to buy it from him but he won't sell it."

Next day I came earlier than usual. G. was sitting on the floor mending a carpet exactly as the Persian had done. Wools of various colors were strewn arorund him and in his hand was the same kind of hook I had seen with the Persian. It transpired that he had cut it with an ordinary file from the blade of a cheap penknife and, in the course of the morning, had fathomed all the mysteries of carpet mending.

He told me a great deal about carpets which, as he often said, represented one of the most ancient forms of art. He spoke of the ancient customs connected with carpet making in certain parts of Asia; of a whole village working together at one carpet; of winter evenings when all the villagers, young and old, gather together in one large building and, dividing into groups, sit or stand on the floor in an order previously known and determined by tradition. Each group then begins its own work. Some pick stones and splinters out of the wool. Others beat out the wool with sticks. A third group combs the wool. The fourth spins. The fifth dyes the wool. The sixth or maybe the twenty-sixth weaves the actual carpet. Men, women, and children, old men and old women, all have their own traditional work. And all the work is done to the accompaniment of music and singing. The women spinners with spindles in their hands dance a special dance as they work, and all the movements of all the people engaged in different work are like one movement in one and the same rhythm. Moreover each locality has its own special tune, its own special songs and dances, connected with carpet making from time immemorial.

And as he told me this the thought flashed across my mind that perhaps the design and coloring of the carpets are connected with the music, are its expression in line and color; that perhaps carpets are records of this music, the *notes* by which the tunes could be reproduced. There was nothing strange in this idea to me as I could often "see" music in the form of a complicated design.

From a few incidental talks with G. I obtained some idea of his previous life.

His childhood was passed on the frontier of Asia Minor in strange, very remote, almost biblical circumstances of life. Flocks of innumerable sheep. Wanderings from place to place. Coming into contact with various strange people. His imagination was particularly struck by the Yezidis, the "Devil Worshipers," who, from his earliest youth, had attracted his attention by

their incomprehensible customs and strange dependence upon unknown laws. He told me, among other things, that when he was a child he had often observed how Yezidi boys were unable to step out of a circle traced round them on the ground.

He had passed his young years in an atmosphere of fairy tales, legends, and traditions. The "miraculous" around him was an actual fact. Predictions of the future which he heard, and which those around him fully believed, were fulfilled and made him believe in many other things.

All these things taken together had created in him at a very early age a leaning towards the mysterious, the incomprehensible, and the magical. He told me that when quite young he made several long journeys in the East. What was true in these stories I could never decide exactly. But, as he said, in the course of these journeys he again came across many phenomena telling him of the existence of a certain knowledge, of certain powers and possibilities exceeding the ordinary possibilities of man, and of people possessing clairvoyance and other miraculous powers. Gradually, he told me, his absences from home and his travels began to follow one definite aim. He went in search of knowledge and the people who possessed this knowledge. And, as he said, after great difficulties, he found the sources of this knowledge in company with several other people who were, like him, also seeking the miraculous.

In all these stories about himself a great deal was contradictory and hardly credible. But I had already realized that no ordinary demands could be made of him, nor could any ordinary standards be applied to him. One could be sure of nothing in regard to him. He might say one thing today and something altogether different tomorrow, and yet, somehow, he could never be accused of contradictions; one had to understand and connect everything together.

About schools and where he had found the knowledge he undoubtedly possessed he spoke very little and always superficially. He mentioned Tibetan monasteries, the Chitral, Mount Athos; Sufi schools in Persia, in Bokhara, and eastern Turkestan; he mentioned dervishes of various orders; but all of them in a very indefinite way.

During one conversation with G. in our group, which was beginning to become permanent, I asked: "Why, if ancient knowledge has been preserved and if, speaking in general, there exists a knowledge distinct from our science and philosophy or even surpassing it, is it so carefully concealed, why is it not made common property? Why are the men who possess this knowledge unwilling to let it pass into the general circulation of life for the sake of a better and more successful struggle against deceit, evil, and ignorance?"

This is, I think, a question which usually arises in everyone's mind on first acquaintance with the ideas of esotericism.

"There are two answers to that," said G. "In the first place, this knowledge is not concealed; and in the second place, it cannot, from its very nature, become common property. We will consider the second of these statements first. I will prove to you afterwards that *knowledge*" (he emphasized the word) "is far more accessible to those capable of assimilating it than is usually supposed; and that the whole trouble is that people either do not want it or cannot receive it.

"But first of all another thing must be understood, namely, that knowledge cannot belong to all, cannot even belong to many. Such is the law. You do not understand this because you do not understand that knowledge, like everything else in the world, is *material*. It is material, and this means that it possesses all the characteristics of materiality. One of the first characteristics of materiality is that matter is always limited, that is to say, the quantity of matter in a given place and under given conditions is limited. Even the sand of the desert and the water of the sea is a definite and unchangeable quantity. So that, if knowledge is material, then it means that there is a definite quantity of it in a given place at a given time. It may be said that, in the course of a certain period of time, say a century, humanity has a definite amount of knowledge at its disposal. But we know, even from an ordinary observation of life, that the *matter of knowledge* possesses entirely different qualities according to whether it is taken in small or large quantities. Taken in a large quantity in a given place, that is by one man, let us say, or by a small group of men, it produces very good results; taken in a small quantity (that is, by every one of a large number of people), it gives no results at all; or it may give even negative results, contrary to those expected. Thus if a certain definite quantity of knowledge is distributed among millions of people, each individual will receive very little, and this small amount of knowledge will change nothing either in his life or in his understanding of things. And however large the number of people who receive this small amount of knowledge, it will change nothing in their lives, except, perhaps, to make them still more difficult.

"But if, on the contrary, large quantities of knowledge are concentrated in a small number of people, then this knowledge will give very great results. From this point of view it is far more advantageous that knowledge should be preserved among a small number of people and not dispersed among the masses.

"If we take a certain quantity of gold and decide to gild a number of objects with it, we must know, or calculate, exactly what number of objects can be gilded with this quantity of gold. If we try to gild a greater number, they will be covered with gold unevenly, in patches, and will look much worse than if they had no gold at all; in fact we shall lose our gold.

"The distribution of knowledge is based upon exactly the same prin-

ciple. If knowledge is given to all, nobody will get any. If it is preserved among a few, each will receive not only enough to keep, but to increase, what he receives.

"At the first glance this theory seems very unjust, since the position of those who are, so to speak, denied knowledge in order that others may receive a greater share appears to be very sad and undeservedly harder than it ought to be. Actually, however, this is not so at all; and in the distribution of knowledge there is not the slightest injustice.

"The fact is that the enormous majority of people do not want any knowledge whatever; they refuse their share of it and do not even take the ration allotted to them, in the general distribution, for the purposes of life. This is particularly evident in times of mass madness such as wars, revolutions, and so on, when men suddenly seem to lose even the small amount of common sense they had and turn into complete automatons, giving themselves over to wholesale destruction in vast numbers, in other words, even losing the instinct of self-preservation. Owing to this, enormous quantities of knowledge remain, so to speak, unclaimed and can be distributed among those who realize its value.

"There is nothing unjust in this, because those who receive knowledge take nothing that belongs to others, deprive others of nothing; they take only what others have rejected as useless and what would in any case be lost if they did not take it.

"The collecting of knowledge by some depends upon the rejection of knowledge by others.

"There are periods in the life of humanity, which generally coincide with the beginning of the fall of cultures and civilizations, when the masses irretrievably lose their reason and begin to destroy everything that has been created by centuries and millenniums of culture. Such periods of mass madness, often coinciding with geological cataclysms, climatic changes, and similar phenomena of a planetary character, release a very great quantity of the matter of knowledge. This, in its turn, necessitates the work of collecting this matter of knowledge which would otherwise be lost. Thus the work of collecting scattered matter of knowledge frequently coincides with the beginning of the destruction and fall of cultures and civilizations.

"This aspect of the question is clear. The crowd neither wants nor seeks knowledge, and the leaders of the crowd, in their own interests, try to strengthen its fear and dislike of everything new and unknown. The slavery in which mankind lives is based upon this fear. It is even difficult to imagine all the horror of this slavery. We do not understand *what* people are losing. But in order to understand the cause of this slavery it is enough to see how people live, what constitutes the aim of their existence, the object of their desires, passions, and aspirations, of what they think, of what they talk, what they serve and what they worship.

Consider what the cultured humanity of our time spends money on; even leaving the war out, what commands the highest price; where the biggest crowds are. If we think for a moment about these questions it becomes clear that humanity, as it is now, with the interests it lives by, cannot expect to have anything different from what it has. But, as I have already said, it cannot be otherwise. Imagine that for the whole of mankind half a pound of knowledge is allotted a year. If this knowledge is distributed among everyone, each will receive so little that he will remain the fool he was. But, thanks to the fact that very few want to have this knowledge, those who take it are able to get, let us say, a grain each, and acquire the possibility of becoming more intelligent. All cannot become intelligent even if they wish. And if they did become intelligent it would not help matters. There exists a general equilibrium which cannot be upset.

"That is one aspect. The other, as I have already said, consists in the fact that no one is concealing anything; there is no mystery whatever. But the acquisition or transmission of true knowledge demands great labor and great effort both of him who receives and of him who gives. And those who possess this knowledge are doing everything they can to transmit and communicate it to the greatest possible number of people, to facilitate people's approach to it and enable them to prepare themselves to receive the truth. But knowledge cannot be given by force to anyone and, as I have already said, an unprejudiced survey of the average man's life, of what fills his day and of the things he is interested in, will at once show whether it is possible to accuse men who possess knowledge of concealing it, of not wishing to give it to people, or of not wishing to teach people what they know themselves.

"He who wants knowledge must himself make the initial efforts to find the source of knowledge and to approach it, taking advantage of the help and indications which are given to all, but which people, as a rule, do not want to see or recognize. Knowledge cannot come to people without effort on their own part. They understand this very well in connection with ordinary knowledge, but in the case of *great knowledge*, when they admit the possibility of its existence, they find it possible to expect something different. Everyone knows very well that if, for instance, a man wants to learn Chinese, it will take several years of intense work; everyone knows that five years are needed to grasp the principles of medicine, and perhaps twice as many years for the study of painting or music. And yet there are theories which affirm that knowledge can come to people without any effort on their part, that they can acquire it *even in sleep*. The very existence of such theories constitutes an additional explanation of why knowledge cannot come to people. At the same time it is essential to understand that man's *independent* efforts to attain anything in this direction can also give no results. A man can only attain knowledge

with the help of those who possess it. This must be understood from the very beginning. *One must learn from him who knows.*"

At one of the following meetings of the group G. continued, in reply to a question, to develop the ideas given by him before on reincarnation and the future life.

The talk began by one of those present asking:

"Can it be said that man possesses immortality?"

"Immortality is one of the qualities we ascribe to people without having a sufficient understanding of their meaning," said G. "Other qualities of this kind are 'individuality,' in the sense of an inner unity, a 'permanent and unchangeable I,' 'consciousness,' and 'will.' All these qualities *can* belong to man" (he emphasized the word "can"), "but this certainly does not mean that they *do belong* to him or belong to each and every one.

"In order to understand *what* man is at the present time, that is, at the present level of development, it is necessary to imagine to a certain extent what he can be, that is, what he can attain. Only by understanding the correct sequence of development possible will people cease to ascribe to themselves what, at present, they do not possess, and what, perhaps, they can only acquire after great effort and great labor.

"According to an ancient teaching, traces of which may be found in many systems, old and new, a man who has attained the full development possible for man, a man in the full sense of the word, *consists of four bodies*. These four bodies are composed of substances which gradually become finer and finer, mutually interpenetrate one another, and form four independent organisms, standing in a definite relationship to one another but capable of independent action.

"The reason why it is possible for four bodies to exist is that the human organism, that is, the physical body, has such a complex organization that, under certain conditions, a new independent organism can grow in it, affording a much more convenient and responsive instrument for the activity of consciousness than the physical body. The consciousness manifested in this new body is capable of governing it, and it has full power and full control over the physical body. In this second body, under certain conditions, a third body can grow, again having characteristics of its own. The consciousness manifested in this third body has full power and control over the first two bodies; and the third body possesses the possibility of acquiring knowledge inaccessible either to the first or to the second body. In the third body, under certain conditions, a fourth can grow, which differs as much from the third as the third differs from the second and the second from the first. The consciousness manifested in the fourth body has full control over the first three bodies and itself.

"These four bodies are defined in different teachings in various ways."

G. drew a diagram, reproduced in Figure 1, and said:

"The first is the physical body, in Christian terminology the 'carnal' body; the second, in Christian terminology, is the 'natural' body; the third is the 'spiritual' body; and the fourth, in the terminology of *esoteric Christianity*, is the 'divine' body. In theosophical terminology the first is the 'physical' body, the second is the 'astral,' the third is the 'mental,' and the fourth the 'causal.' [1]

"In the terminology of certain Eastern teachings the first body is the 'carriage' (body), the second body is the 'horse' (feelings, desires), the third the 'driver' (mind), and the fourth the 'master' (I, consciousness, will).

1st body	2nd body	3rd body	4th body
Carnal body	Natural body	Spiritual body	Divine body
"Carriage" (body)	"Horse" (feelings, desires)	"Driver" (mind)	"Master" (I, consciousness, will)
Physical body	Astral body	Mental body	Causal body

FIG. 1

"Such comparisons and parallels may be found in most systems and teachings which recognize something more in man than the physical body. But almost all these teachings, while repeating in a more or less familiar form the definitions and divisions of the ancient teaching, have forgotten or omitted its most important feature, which is: that man is not born with the finer bodies, and that they can only be artificially cultivated in him provided favorable conditions both internal and external are present.

"The 'astral body' is not an indispensable implement for man. It is a great luxury which only a few can afford. A man can live quite well without an 'astral body.' His physical body possesses all the functions necessary for life. A man without 'astral body' may even produce the impression of being a very intellectual or even *spiritual man*, and may deceive not only others but also himself.

"This applies still more, of course, to the 'mental body' and the fourth body. Ordinary man does not possess these bodies or their corresponding functions. But he often thinks, and makes others think, that he does. The reasons for this are, first, the fact that the physical body works with the same substances of which the higher bodies are composed, only these substances are not crystallized in him, do not belong to him; and secondly, it has all the functions analogous to those of the higher bodies, though of

[1] That is, the body which bears the causes of its actions within itself, is independent of external causes, and is the *body of will*.

course they differ from them considerably. The chief difference between the functions of a man possessing the physical body only and the functions of the *four bodies*, is that, in the first case, the functions of the *physical body* govern all the other functions, in other words, everything is governed by the body which, in its turn, is governed by external influences. In the second case, the command or control emanates from the higher body.

"The functions of the physical body may be represented as parallel to the functions of the four bodies."

G. drew another diagram (Fig. 2), representing the parallel functions of a man of physical body and a man of four bodies.

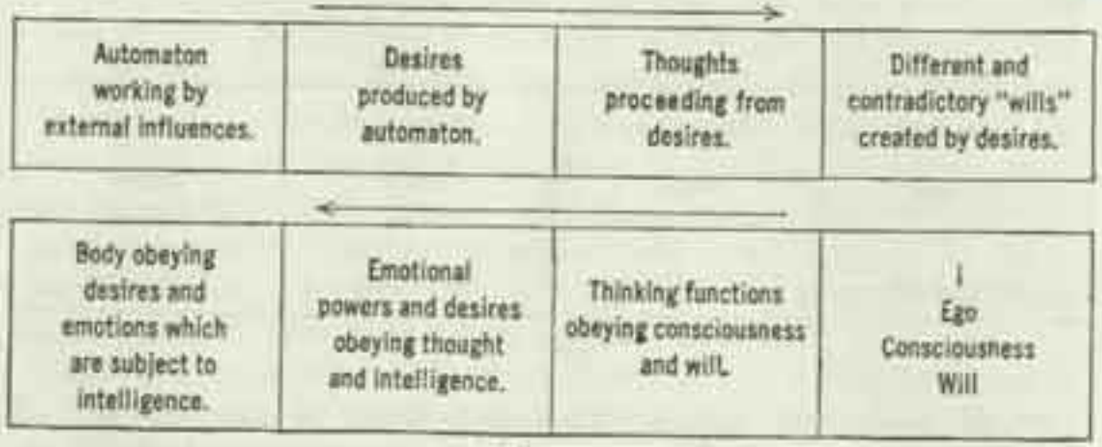

FIG. 2.

"In the first case," said *G.*, "that is, in relation to the functions of a man of physical body only, the automaton depends upon external influences, and the next three functions depend upon the physical body and the external influences it receives. Desires or aversions—'I want,' 'I don't want,' 'I like,' 'I don't like'—that is, functions occupying the place of the second body, depend upon accidental shocks and influences. Thinking, which corresponds to the functions of the third body, is an entirely mechanical process. 'Will' is absent in ordinary mechanical man, he has desires only; and a greater or lesser *permanence* of desires and wishes is called a strong or a weak will.

"In the second case, that is, in relation to the functions of the four bodies, the automatism of the physical body depends upon the influences of the other bodies. Instead of the discordant and often contradictory activity of different desires, there is *one single I*, whole, indivisible, and permanent; there is *individuality*, dominating the physical body and its desires and able to overcome both its reluctance and its resistance. Instead of the mechanical process of thinking there is *consciousness*. And there is *will*, that is, a power, not merely composed of various often contradictory desires belonging to different "I's," but issuing from consciousness and governed by individuality or a single and permanent I. Only such a will can be called "free," for it is independent of accident and cannot be altered or directed from without.

"An Eastern teaching describes the functions of the four bodies, their gradual growth, and the conditions of this growth, in the following way:

"Let us imagine a vessel or a retort filled with various metallic powders. The powders are not in any way connected with each other and every accidental change in the position of the retort changes the relative position of the powders. If the retort be shaken or tapped with the finger, then the powder which was at the top may appear at the bottom or in the middle, while the one which was at the bottom may appear at the top. There is nothing permanent in the position of the powders and under such conditions there can be nothing permanent. This is an exact picture of our psychic life. Each succeeding moment, new influences may change the position of the powder which is on the top and put in its place another which is absolutely its opposite. Science calls this state of the powders the state of mechanical mixture. The essential characteristic of the interrelation of the powders to one another in this kind of mixture is the instability of these interrelations and their variability.

"It is impossible to stabilize the interrelation of powders in a state of mechanical mixture. But the powders may be fused; the nature of the powders makes this possible. To do this a special kind of fire must be lighted under the retort which, by heating and melting the powders, finally fuses them together. Fused in this way the powders will be in the state of a chemical compound. And now they can no longer be separated by those simple methods which separated and made them change places when they were in a state of mechanical mixture. The contents of the retort have become indivisible, 'individual.' This is a picture of the formation of the second body. The fire by means of which fusion is attained is produced by 'friction,' which in its turn is produced in man by the struggle between 'yes' and 'no.' If a man gives way to all his desires, or panders to them, there will be no inner struggle in him, no 'friction,' no fire. But if, for the sake of attaining a definite aim, he struggles with desires that hinder him, he will then create a fire which will gradually transform his inner world into a single whole.

"Let us return to our example. The chemical compound obtained by fusion possesses certain qualities, a certain specific gravity, a certain electrical conductivity, and so on. These qualities constitute the characteristics of the substance in question. But by means of work upon it of a certain kind the number of these characteristics may be increased, that is, the alloy may be given new properties which did not primarily belong to it. It may be possible to magnetize it, to make it radioactive, and so on.

"The process of imparting new properties to the alloy corresponds to

the process of the formation of the third body and of the acquisition of new knowledge and powers with the help of the third body.

"When the third body has been formed and has acquired all the properties, powers, and knowledge possible for it, there remains the problem of fixing this knowledge and these powers, because, having been imparted to it by influences of a certain kind, they may be taken away by these same influences or by others. By means of a special kind of work for all three bodies the acquired properties may be made the permanent and inalienable possession of the third body.

"The process of fixing these acquired properties corresponds to the process of the formation of the fourth body.

"And only the man who possesses four fully developed bodies can be called a 'man' in the full sense of the word. This man possesses many properties which ordinary man does not possess. *One of these properties is immortality.* All religions and all ancient teachings contain the idea that, by acquiring the fourth body, man acquires immortality; and they all contain indications of the ways to acquire the fourth body, that is, immortality.

"In this connection certain teachings compare man to a house of four rooms. Man lives in one room, the smallest and poorest of all, and until he is told of it, he does not suspect the existence of the other rooms which are full of treasures. When he does learn of this he begins to seek the keys of these rooms and especially of the fourth, the most important, room. And when a man has found his way into this room he really becomes the master of his house, for only then does the house belong to him wholly and forever.

"The fourth room gives man immortality and all religious teachings strive to show the way to it. There are a great many ways, some shorter and some longer, some harder and some easier, but all, without exception, lead or strive to lead in one direction, that is, to immortality."

At the next meeting G. began where he had left off the time before.

"I said last time," he said, "that *immortality* is not a property with which man is born. But man can acquire immortality. All existing and generally known ways to immortality can be divided into three categories:

1. *The way of the fakir.*
2. *The way of the monk.*
3. *The way of the yogi.*

"The way of the fakir is the way of struggle with the physical body, the way of work on the first room. This is a long, difficult, and uncertain way. The fakir strives to develop physical will, power over the body. This is attained by means of terrible sufferings, by torturing the body. The whole way of the fakir consists of various incredibly difficult physical

exercises. The fakir either stands motionless in the same position for hours, days, months, or years; or sits with outstretched arms on a bare stone in sun, rain, and snow; or tortures himself with fire, puts his legs into an ant-heap, and so on. If he does not fall ill and die before what may be called physical will is developed in him, then he attains the fourth room or the possibility of forming the fourth body. But his other functions—emotional, intellectual, and so forth—remain undeveloped. He has acquired will but he has nothing to which he can apply it, he cannot make use of it for gaining knowledge or for self-perfection. As a rule he is too old to begin new work.

"But where there are schools of fakirs there are also schools of yogis. Yogis generally keep an eye on fakirs. If a fakir attains what he has aspired to before he is too old, they take him into a yogi school, where first they heal him and restore his power of movement, and then begin to teach him. A fakir has to learn to walk and to speak like a baby. But he now possesses a will which has overcome incredible difficulties on his way and this will may help him to overcome the difficulties on the second part of the way, the difficulties, namely, of developing the intellectual and emotional functions.

"You cannot imagine what hardships fakirs undergo. I do not know whether you have seen real fakirs or not. I have seen many; for instance, I saw one in the inner court of a temple in India and I even slept near him. Day and night for twenty years he had been standing on the tips of his fingers and toes. He was no longer able to straighten himself. His pupils carried him from one place to another, took him to the river and washed him like some inanimate object. But this was not attained all at once. Think what he had to overcome, what tortures he must have suffered in order to get to that stage.

"And a man becomes a fakir not because he understands the possibilities and the results of this way, and not because of religious feeling. In all Eastern countries where fakirs exist there is a custom among the common people of promising to give to fakirs a child born after some happy event. Besides this, fakirs often adopt orphans, or simply buy little children from poor parents. These children become their pupils and imitate them, or are made to imitate them, some only outwardly, but some afterwards become fakirs themselves.

"In addition to these, other people become fakirs simply from being struck by some fakir they have seen. Near every fakir in the temples people can be seen who imitate him, who sit or stand in the same posture. Not for long of course, but still occasionally for several hours. And sometimes it happens that a man who went into the temple accidentally on a feast day, and began to imitate some fakir who particularly struck him, does not return home any more but joins the crowd of that fakir's disciples and later, in the course of time, becomes a fakir himself. You must under-

stand that I take the word 'fakir' in quotation marks. In Persia *fakir* simply means a beggar; and in India a great many jugglers call themselves *fakirs*. And Europeans, particularly learned Europeans, very often give the name of fakir to *yogis*, as well as to *monks* of various wandering orders.

"But in reality the way of the fakir, the way of the monk, and the way of the yogi are entirely different. So far I have spoken of fakirs. This is the first way.

"The second way is the way of the monk. This is the way of faith, the way of religious feeling, religious sacrifice. Only a man with very strong religious emotions and a very strong religious imagination can become a 'monk' in the true sense of the word. The way of the monk also is very long and hard. A monk spends years and tens of years struggling with himself, but all his work is concentrated on the second room, on the second body, that is, on *feelings*. Subjecting all his other emotions to one emotion, that is, to faith, he develops *unity* in himself, will over the emotions, and in this way reaches the fourth room. But his physical body and his thinking capacities may remain undeveloped. In order to be able to make use of what he has attained, he must develop his body and his capacity to think. This can only be achieved by means of fresh sacrifices, fresh hardships, fresh renunciations. *A monk has to become a yogi and a fakir.* Very few get as far as this; even fewer overcome all difficulties. Most of them either die before this or become monks in outward appearance only.

"The third way is the way of the yogi. This is the way of knowledge, the way of mind. The way of the yogi consists in working on the third room and in striving to enter the fourth room by means of knowledge. The yogi reaches the fourth room by developing his mind, but his body and emotions remain undeveloped and, like the fakir and the monk, he is unable to make use of the results of his attainment. He knows everything but can do nothing. In order to begin to do he must gain the mastery over his body and emotions, that is, over the first and second rooms. To do this he must again set to work and again obtain results by means of prolonged efforts. In this case however he has the advantage of understanding his position, of knowing what he lacks, what he must do, and in what direction he must go. But, as on the way of the fakir or the monk, very few acquire this understanding on the way of the yogi, that is, that level in his work on which a man knows where he is going. A great many stop at one particular achievement and go no further.

"The ways also differ from each other by their relation to the teacher or leader.

"On the way of the fakir a man has no teacher in the true sense of the word. The teacher in this case does not teach but simply serves as an example. The pupil's work consists in imitating the teacher.

"On the way of the monk a man has a teacher, and a part of his duty, a part of his work, consists in having absolute faith in the teacher, in submitting to him absolutely, *in obedience*. But the chief thing on the way of the monk is faith in God, in the love of God, in constant efforts to obey and serve God, although, in his understanding of the idea of God and of serving God, there may be much that is subjective and contradictory.

"On the way of the yogi a man can do nothing, and must do nothing, without a teacher. In the beginning he must imitate his teacher like the fakir and believe in him like the monk. But, afterwards, a man on the way of the yogi gradually becomes his own teacher. He learns his teacher's methods and gradually learns to apply them to himself.

"But all the ways, the way of the fakir as well as the way of the monk and the way of the yogi, have one thing in common. They all begin with the most difficult thing, with a complete change of life, with a renunciation of all worldly things. A man must give up his home, his family if he has one, renounce all the pleasures, attachments, and duties of life, and go out into the desert, or into a monastery or a yogi school. From the very first day, from the very first step on his way, he must die to the world; only thus can he hope to attain anything on one of these ways.

"In order to grasp the essence of this teaching it is necessary clearly to understand the idea that the *ways* are the *only* possible methods for the development of man's hidden possibilities. This in turn shows how difficult and rare such development is. The development of these possibilities is not a law. The law for man is existence in the circle of mechanical influences, the state of 'man-machine.' The way of the development of hidden possibilities is a way *against nature, against God.* This explains the difficulties and the exclusiveness of the ways. The ways are narrow and strait. But at the same time only by them can anything be attained. In the general mass of everyday life, especially modern life, the ways are a small, quite imperceptible phenomenon which, from the point of view of life, need not exist at all. But this small phenomenon contains in itself *all* that man has for the development of his hidden possibilities. The ways are opposed to everyday life, based upon other principles and subject to other laws. In this consists their power and their significance. In everyday life, even in a life filled with scientific, philosophical, religious, or social interests, there is nothing, *and there can be nothing*, which could give the possibilities which are contained in the ways. The ways lead, or should lead, man to immortality. Everyday life, even at its best, leads man to death and can lead to nothing else. The idea of the ways cannot be understood if the possibility of man's evolution without their help is admitted.

"As a rule it is hard for man to reconcile himself to this thought; it seems to him exaggerated, unjust, and absurd. He has a poor understanding of the meaning of the word 'possibility.' He fancies that if he has any possibilities in himself they must be developed and that there must be means for their development in his environment. From a total refusal to acknowledge in himself any possibilities whatever, man generally proceeds forthwith to demand the imperative and inevitable development of these possibilities. It is difficult for him to accept the thought that his possibilities may remain altogether undeveloped and disappear, and that their development, on the other hand, requires of him tremendous effort and endurance. As a matter of fact, if we take all the people who are neither fakirs, monks, nor yogis, and of whom we may say with confidence that they never will be either fakirs, monks, or yogis, then we may say with undoubted certainty that their possibilities *cannot be developed and will not be developed*. This must be clearly understood in order to grasp all that follows.

"In the ordinary conditions of cultured life the position of a man, even of an intelligent man, who is seeking for knowledge is hopeless, because, in the circumstances surrounding him, there is nothing resembling either fakir or yogi schools, while the religions of the West have degenerated to such an extent that for a long time there has been nothing alive in them. Various occult and mystical societies and naïve experiments in the nature of spiritualism, and so on, can give no results whatever.

"And the position would indeed be hopeless if the possibility of yet a *fourth way* did not exist.

"The fourth way requires no retirement into the desert, does not require a man to give up and renounce everything by which he formerly lived. The fourth way begins much further on than the way of the yogi. This means that a man must be prepared for the fourth way and this preparation must be acquired in ordinary life and be a very serious one, embracing many different sides. Furthermore a man must be living in conditions favorable for work on the fourth way, or, in any case, in conditions which do not render it impossible. It must be understood that both in the inner and in the external life of a man there may be conditions which create insuperable barriers to the fourth way. Furthermore, the fourth way has no definite forms like the ways of the fakir, the monk, and the yogi. And, first of all, it has to *be found*. This is the first test. It is not as well known as the three traditional ways. There are many people who have never heard of the fourth way and there are others who deny its existence or possibility.

"At the same time the beginning of the fourth way is easier than the beginning of the ways of the fakir, the monk, and the yogi. On the fourth way it is possible to work and to follow this way while remaining in

the usual conditions of life, continuing to do the usual work, preserving former relations with people, and without renouncing or giving up anything. On the contrary, the conditions of life in which a man is placed at the beginning of his work, in which, so to speak, the work finds him, are the *best possible* for him, at any rate at the beginning of the work. These conditions are natural for him. These conditions *are the man himself*, because a man's life and its conditions correspond to what he is. Any conditions different from those created by life would be artificial for a man and in such artificial conditions the work would not be able to touch every side of his being at once.

"Thanks to this, the fourth way affects simultaneously every side of man's being. It is work *on the three rooms at once*. The fakir works on the first room, the monk on the second, the yogi on the third. In reaching the fourth room the fakir, the monk, and the yogi leave behind them many things unfinished, and they cannot make use of what they have attained because they are not masters of all their functions. The fakir is master of his body but not of his emotions or his mind; the monk is master of his emotions but not of his body or his mind; the yogi is master of his mind but not of his body or his emotions.

"Then the fourth way differs from the other ways in that the principal demand made upon a man is the demand for understanding. A man must do nothing that he does not understand, except as an experiment under the supervision and direction of his teacher. The more a man understands what he is doing, the greater will be the results of his efforts. This is a fundamental principle of the fourth way. The results of work are in proportion to the consciousness of the work. No 'faith' is required on the fourth way; on the contrary, faith of any kind is opposed to the fourth way. On the fourth way a man must satisfy himself of the truth of what he is told. And until he is satisfied he must do nothing.

"The method of the fourth way consists in doing something in one room and simultaneously doing something corresponding to it in the two other rooms—that is to say, while working on the physical body to work simultaneously on the mind and the emotions; while working on the mind to work on the physical body and the emotions; while working on the emotions to work on the mind and the physical body. This can be achieved thanks to the fact that on the fourth way it is possible to make use of certain knowledge inaccessible to the ways of the fakir, the monk, and the yogi. This knowledge makes it possible to work in three directions simultaneously. A whole parallel series of physical, mental, and emotional exercises serves this purpose. In addition, on the fourth way it is possible to individualize the work of each separate person, that is to say, each person can do only what is necessary and not what is *useless for him*. This is due to the fact that the fourth way dispenses with a great

deal of what is superfluous and preserved simply through tradition in the other ways.

"So that when a man attains will on the fourth way he can make use of it because he has acquired control of all his bodily, emotional, and intellectual functions. And besides, he has saved a great deal of time by working on the three sides of his being in parallel and simultaneously.

"The fourth way is sometimes called *the way of the sly man*. The 'sly man' knows some secret which the fakir, monk, and yogi do not know. How the 'sly man' learned this secret—it is not known. Perhaps he found it in some old books, perhaps he inherited it, perhaps he bought it, perhaps he stole it from someone. It makes no difference. The 'sly man' knows the secret and with its help outstrips the fakir, the monk, and the yogi.

"Of the four, the fakir acts in the crudest manner; he knows very little and understands very little. Let us suppose that by a whole month of intense torture he develops in himself a certain energy, a certain substance which produces certain changes in him. He does it absolutely blindly, with his eyes shut, knowing neither aim, methods, nor results, simply in imitation of others.

"The monk knows what he wants a little better; he is guided by religious feeling, by religious tradition, by a desire for achievement, for salvation; he trusts his teacher who tells him what to do, and he believes that his efforts and sacrifices are 'pleasing to God.' Let us suppose that a week of fasting, continual prayer, privations, and so on, enables him to attain what the fakir develops in himself by a month of self-torture.

"The yogi knows considerably more. He knows what he wants, he knows why he wants it, he knows how it can be acquired. He knows, for instance, that it is necessary for his purpose to produce a certain substance in himself. He knows that this substance can be produced in one day by a certain kind of mental exercises or concentration of consciousness. So he keeps his attention on these exercises for a whole day without allowing himself a single outside thought, and he obtains what he needs. In this way a yogi spends on the same thing only one day compared with a month spent by the fakir and a week spent by the monk.

"But on the fourth way knowledge is still more exact and perfect. A man who follows the fourth way knows quite definitely what substances he needs for his aims and he knows that these substances can be produced within the body by a month of physical suffering, by a week of emotional strain, or by a day of mental exercises—and also, *that they can be introduced into the organism from without if it is known how to do it*. And so, instead of spending a whole day in exercises like the yogi, a week in prayer like the monk, or a month in self-torture like the fakir, he simply prepares and swallows a little pill which contains all the substances

he wants and, in this way, without loss of time, he obtains the required results.

"It must be noted further," said G., "that in addition to these proper and legitimate ways, there are also artificial ways which give temporary results only, and wrong ways which may even give permanent results, only wrong results. On these ways a man also seeks the key to the fourth room and sometimes finds it. But what he finds in the fourth room is not yet known.

"It also happens that the door to the fourth room is opened artificially with a skeleton key. And in both these cases the room may prove to be empty."

With this G. stopped.

At one of the following talks we again touched on the *ways*.

"For a man of Western culture," I said, "it is of course difficult to believe and to accept the idea that an ignorant fakir, a naïve monk, or a yogi who has retired from life may be on the way to evolution while an educated European, armed with 'exact knowledge' and all the latest methods of investigation, has no chance whatever and is moving in a circle from which there is no escape."

"Yes, that is because people believe in progress and culture," said G. "*There is no progress whatever*. Everything is just the same as it was thousands, and tens of thousands, of years ago. The outward form changes. The essence does not change. Man remains just the same. 'Civilized' and 'cultured' people live with exactly the same interests as the most ignorant savages. Modern civilization is based on violence and slavery and fine words. But all these fine words about 'progress' and 'civilization' are merely words."

This of course produced a particularly deep impression on us, because it was said in 1916, when the latest manifestation of "civilization," in the form of a war such as the world had not yet seen, was continuing to grow and develop, drawing more and more millions of people into its orbit.

I remembered that a few days before this talk I had seen two enormous lorries on the Liteiny loaded to the height of the first floor of the houses with new unpainted wooden *crutches*. For some reason I was particularly struck by these lorries. In these mountains of crutches *for legs which were not yet torn off* there was a particularly cynical mockery of all the things with which people deceive themselves. Involuntarily I imagined that similar lorries were sure to be going about in Berlin, Paris, London, Vienna, Rome, and Constantinople. And, as a result, all these cities, almost all of which I knew so well and liked just because they were so different and because they supplemented and gave contrast to one an-

other, had now become hostile both to me and to each other and separated by new walls of hatred and crime.

I spoke to our people about these lorry-loads of crutches and of my thoughts about them at a meeting.

"What do you expect?" said G. "People are machines. Machines have to be blind and unconscious, they cannot be otherwise, and all their actions have to correspond to their nature. *Everything happens.* No one does anything. 'Progress' and 'civilization,' in the real meaning of these words, can appear only as the result of *conscious* efforts. They cannot appear as the result of unconscious mechanical actions. And what conscious effort can there be in machines? And if one machine is unconscious, then a hundred machines are unconscious, and so are a thousand machines, or a hundred thousand, or a million. And the unconscious activity of *a million machines* must necessarily result in destruction and extermination. It is precisely in unconscious involuntary manifestations that all evil lies. You do not yet understand and cannot imagine all the results of this evil. But the time will come when you will understand."

With this, so far as I remember, the talk ended.

Chapter Three

BY THE beginning of November, 1915, I already had a grasp of some of the fundamental points of G.'s system in relation to man.

The first point, on which he laid stress, was the *absence of unity in man.*

"It is the greatest mistake," he said, "to think that man is always one and the same. A man is never the same for long. He is continually changing. He seldom remains the same even for half an hour. We think that if a man is called Ivan he is always Ivan. Nothing of the kind. Now he is Ivan, in another minute he is Peter, and a minute later he is Nicholas, Sergius, Matthew, Simon. And all of you think he is Ivan. You know that Ivan cannot do a certain thing. He cannot tell a lie for instance. Then you find he has told a lie and you are surprised he could have done so. And, indeed, Ivan cannot lie; it is Nicholas who lied. And when the opportunity presents itself Nicholas *cannot help lying.* You will be astonished when you realize what a multitude of these Ivans and Nicholases live in one man. If you learn to observe them there is no need to go to a cinema."

"Has this anything to do with the consciousnesses of separate parts and organs of the body?" I asked him on this occasion. "I understand this idea and have often felt the reality of these consciousnesses. I know that not only separate organs, but every part of the body having a separate function has a separate consciousness. The right hand has one consciousness and the left hand another. Is that what you mean?"

"Not altogether," said G. "These consciousnesses also exist but they are comparatively harmless. Each of them knows its own place and its own business. The hands know they must work; the feet know they must walk. But these Ivans, Peters, and Nicholases are different. They all call themselves 'I.' That is, they consider themselves masters and none wants to recognize another. Each of them is caliph for an hour, does what he likes regardless of everything, and, later on, the others have to pay for it. And there is no order among them whatever. Whoever gets the upper hand is master. He whips everyone on all sides and takes heed of nothing. But the next moment another seizes the whip and beats him. And so it goes on all one's life. Imagine a country where everyone can be king for

five minutes and do during these five minutes just what he likes with the whole kingdom. That is our life."

During one of the talks G. again returned to the idea of the different bodies of man.

"That man can have several bodies," he said, "must be understood as an idea, as a principle. But it does not apply to us. We know we have the one physical body and we know nothing else. It is the physical body that we must study. Only, we must remember that the question is not limited to the physical body and that there are people who may have two, three, or more bodies. But it makes no difference to us personally either one way or another. Someone like Rockefeller in America may have a great many millions, but his millions do not help me if I have nothing to eat. It is the same thing in this connection. Everyone must think of himself; it is useless and senseless to rely on others or to console oneself with thoughts of what others possess."

"How is one to know if a man has an 'astral body'?" I asked.

"There are definite ways of knowing that," answered G. "Under certain conditions the 'astral body' can be seen; it can be separated from the physical body and even photographed at the side of the physical body. The existence of the 'astral body' can be still more easily and simply established *by its functions*. The 'astral body' has definite functions which the physical body cannot have. The presence of these functions indicates the presence of the 'astral body.' The absence of these functions shows the absence of the 'astral body.' But it is too early to speak of this now. All our attention must be concentrated on the study of the physical body. It is necessary to understand the structure of the human machine. Our principal error is that we think we have *one mind*. We call the functions of this mind 'conscious'; everything that does not enter this mind we call 'unconscious' or 'subconscious.' This is our chief error. Of the conscious and the unconscious we will speak later. At this moment I want to explain to you that the activity of the human machine, that is, of the physical body, is controlled, not by one, but by several *minds*, entirely independent of each other, having separate functions and separate spheres in which they manifest themselves. This must be understood first of all, because unless this is understood nothing else can be understood."

After this G. went on to explain man's various functions and centers controlling these functions in the way they are set out in the psychological lectures.

These explanations, and all the talks connected with them, took a fairly long time, while at almost every talk we returned to the fundamental ideas of man's mechanicalness, of the absence of unity in man, of man's having no choice, of his being unable *to do*, and so on. There is no possibility of giving all these talks in the way they actually took place. For this reason I collected all the psychological and all the cosmological material in two separate series of lectures.

In this connection it must be noted that the ideas were not given us in the form in which they are set out in my lectures. G. gave the ideas little by little, as though defending or protecting them from us. When touching on new themes for the first time he gave only general principles, often holding back the most essential. Sometimes he himself pointed out apparent discrepancies in the theories given, which were, in fact, precisely due to these reservations and suppressions. The next time, in approaching the same subject, whenever possible from a different angle, he gave more. The third time he gave still more. On the question of functions and centers for instance. On the first occasion he spoke of *three centers*, the intellectual, the emotional, and the moving, and tried to make us distinguish these functions, find examples, and so on. Afterwards the instinctive center was added, as an independent and self-supporting machine. Afterwards the sex center. I remember that some of his remarks arrested my attention. For instance, when speaking of the sex center he said it practically never worked independently because it was always dependent on other centers, the intellectual, the emotional, the instinctive, and the moving. Then in speaking of the energy of centers he often returned to what he called wrong work of centers and to the role of the sex center in this work. He spoke a great deal about how all centers rob the sex center of its energy and produce with this energy quite long work full of useless excitement and, in return, give to the sex center useless energy with which it was unable to work.

I remember his words.

"It is a very big thing when the sex center works with its own energy, but it happens very seldom."

I recollect another remark which afterwards proved a ground for much wrong reasoning and many wrong conclusions. This was that the three centers of the lower story: the instinctive, the moving, and the sex centers, work, in relation to each other, in the order of *three forces*—and that the sex center, in normal cases, acts as neutralizing force in relation to the instinctive and moving centers acting as active and passive forces.

The method of exposition of which I am speaking, and G.'s suppressions in his first talks, resulted in the creation of such misunderstanding, more particularly in later groups not connected with my work.

Many people found contradictions between the first exposition of a given idea and subsequent explanations and sometimes, in trying to hold as closely as possible to the first, they created fantastic theories having no relation to what G. actually said. Thus the idea of *three centers* was retained by certain groups (which, I repeat, were not connected with me). And this idea was, in some way, linked up with the idea of *three*

forces, with which in reality it had no connection, first of all because there are not three centers but five in the ordinary man.

This uniting of two ideas of an entirely different order, scale, and significance gave rise to many further misunderstandings and completely distorted the whole system for those who thought in this manner.

It is possible that the idea of the three centers (intellectual, emotional, and moving) being the expression of the three forces arose from G.'s wrongly repeated and wrongly received remarks on the relationship to each other of the three centers of the lower story.

During the first and subsequent talks on centers G. added something new at almost every talk. As I said in the beginning he spoke first of three centers, then of four, then of five, and afterwards of seven centers.

Parts of centers hardly came into these talks. G. said that centers were divided into positive and negative parts, but he did not point out that this division was *not identical* for all the different centers. Then he said that each center was divided into three parts or *three stories* which, in their turn, were also divided into three; but he gave no examples, nor did he point out that observation of attention made it possible to distinguish the work of parts of centers. All this and much else besides was established later. For instance, although he undoubtedly gave the fundamental basis for the study of the role and the significance of negative emotions, as well as methods of struggling against them, referring to non-identification, non-considering, and not expressing negative emotions, he did not complete these theories or did not explain that negative emotions were entirely *unnecessary* and that no normal center for them existed.

I shall, further on, reproduce the talks and lectures of the St. Petersburg and later groups in the way I remember them while endeavoring to avoid what has already been given in the first and second series of lectures. But it is impossible to avoid repetition in certain cases and the original exposition of the ideas of the system in the way G. gave them is, in my opinion, of great interest.

Somebody asked at a meeting:

"How should evolution be understood?"

"The evolution of man," G. replied, "can be taken as the development in him of those powers and possibilities which never develop by themselves, that is, mechanically. Only this kind of development, only this kind of growth, marks the real evolution of man. There is, and there can be, no other kind of evolution whatever.

"We have before us man at the present moment of his development. Nature has made him such as he is, and, in large masses, so far as we can see, such he will remain. Changes likely to violate the general requirements of nature can only take place in separate units.

"In order to understand the law of man's evolution it is necessary to grasp that, beyond a certain point, this evolution is not at all necessary, that is to say, it is not necessary for nature at a given moment in its own development. To speak more precisely: the evolution of mankind corresponds to the evolution of the planets, but the evolution of the planets proceeds, for us, in infinitely prolonged cycles of time. Throughout the stretch of time that human thought can embrace, no essential changes can take place in the life of the planets, and, consequently, no essential changes can take place in the life of mankind.

"Humanity neither progresses nor evolves. What seems to us to be progress or evolution is a partial modification which can be immediately counterbalanced by a corresponding modification in an opposite direction.

"Humanity, like the rest of organic life, exists on earth for the needs and purposes of the earth. And it is exactly as it should be for the earth's requirements at the present time.

"Only thought as theoretical and as far removed from fact as modern European thought could have conceived the evolution of man to be possible *apart from surrounding nature*, or have regarded the evolution of man as a gradual *conquest of nature*. This is quite impossible. In living, in dying, in evolving, in degenerating, man equally serves the purposes of nature—or, rather, nature makes equal use, though perhaps for different purposes, of the products of both evolution and degeneration. And, at the same time, humanity as a whole can never escape from nature, for, even in struggling against nature man acts in conformity with her purposes. The evolution of large masses of humanity is opposed to nature's purposes. The evolution of a certain small percentage may be in accord with nature's purposes. Man contains within him the possibility of evolution. But the evolution of humanity as a whole, that is, the development of these possibilities in all men, or in most of them, or even in a large number of them, is not necessary for the purposes of the earth or of the planetary world in general, and it might, in fact, be injurious or fatal. There exist, therefore, special forces (of a planetary character) which oppose the evolution of large masses of humanity and keep it at the level it ought to be.

"For instance, the evolution of humanity beyond a certain point, or, to speak more correctly, above a certain percentage, would be fatal for the *moon*. The moon at present *feeds* on organic life, on humanity. Humanity is a part of organic life; this means that humanity is *food* for the moon. If all men were to become too intelligent they would not want to be eaten by the moon.

"But, at the same time, possibilities of evolution exist, and they may be developed in *separate* individuals with the help of appropriate knowledge and methods. Such development can take place only in the interests of the man himself against, so to speak, the interests and forces of the

planetary world. The man must understand this: his evolution is necessary only to himself. No one else is interested in it. And no one is obliged or intends to help him. On the contrary, the forces which oppose the evolution of large masses of humanity also oppose the evolution of individual men. A man must outwit them. And *one* man can outwit them, humanity *cannot*. You will understand later on that all these obstacles are very useful to a man; if they did not exist they would have to be created intentionally, because it is by overcoming obstacles that man develops those qualities he needs.

"This is the basis of the correct view of human evolution. There is no compulsory, mechanical evolution. Evolution is the result of conscious struggle. Nature does not need this evolution; it does not want it and struggles against it. Evolution can be necessary only to man himself when he realizes his position, realizes the possibility of changing this position, realizes that he has powers that he does not use, riches that he does not see. And, in the sense of gaining possession of these powers and riches, evolution is possible. But if *all men*, or most of them, realized this and desired to obtain what belongs to them by right of birth, evolution would again become impossible. What is possible for individual man is impossible for the masses.

"The advantage of the separate individual is that he is very small and that, in the economy of nature, it makes no difference whether there is one mechanical man more or less. We can easily understand this correlation of magnitudes if we imagine the correlation between a microscopic cell and our own body. The presence or absence of one cell will change nothing in the life of the body. We cannot be conscious of it, and it can have no influence on the life and functions of the organism. In exactly the same way a separate individual is too small to influence the life of the cosmic organism to which he stands in the same relation (with regard to size) as a cell stands to our own organism. And this is precisely what makes his 'evolution' possible; on this are based his 'possibilities.'

"In speaking of evolution it is necessary to understand from the outset that no mechanical evolution is possible. The evolution of man is the evolution of his consciousness. *And 'consciousness' cannot evolve unconsciously.* The evolution of man is the evolution of his will, and 'will' cannot evolve involuntarily. The evolution of man is the evolution of his power of doing, and 'doing' cannot be the result of things which 'happen.'

"People do not know what man is. They have to do with a very complex machine, far more complex than a railway engine, a motorcar, or an aeroplane—but they know nothing, or almost nothing, about the construction, working, or possibilities of this machine; they do not even understand its simplest functions, because they do not know the purpose of these functions. They vaguely imagine that a man should learn to control his machine, just as he has to learn to control a railway engine, a motorcar, or an aeroplane, and that incompetent handling of the human machine is just as dangerous as incompetent handling of any other complex machine. Everybody understands this in relation to an aeroplane, a motorcar, or a railway engine. But it is very rarely that anyone takes this into account in relation to man in general or to himself in particular. It is considered right and legitimate to think that nature has given men the necessary knowledge of their machine. And yet men understand that an instinctive knowledge of the machine is by no means enough. Why do they study medicine and make use of its services? Because, of course, they realize they do not know their machine. But they do not suspect that it can be known much better than science knows it; they do not suspect that then it would be possible to get quite different work out of it."

Very often, almost at every talk, G. returned to the absence of unity in man.

"One of man's important mistakes," he said, "one which must be remembered, is his illusion in regard to his I.

"Man such as we know him, the 'man-machine,' the man who cannot 'do,' and with whom and through whom everything 'happens,' cannot have a permanent and single I. His I changes as quickly as his thoughts, feelings, and moods, and he makes a profound mistake in considering himself always one and the same person; in reality he is *always a different person*, not the one he was a moment ago.

"*Man has no permanent and unchangeable I.* Every thought, every mood, every desire, every sensation, says 'I.' And in each case it seems to be taken for granted that this I belongs to the *Whole*, to the whole man, and that a thought, a desire, or an aversion is expressed by this Whole. In actual fact there is no foundation whatever for this assumption. Man's every thought and desire appears and lives quite separately and independently of the Whole. And the Whole never expresses itself, for the simple reason that it exists, as such, only physically as a thing, and in the abstract as a concept. Man has no individual I. But there are, instead, hundreds and thousands of separate small I's, very often entirely unknown to one another, never coming into contact, or, on the contrary, hostile to each other, mutually exclusive and incompatible. Each minute, each moment, man is saying or thinking 'I.' And each time his I is different. Just now it was a thought, now it is a desire, now a sensation, now another thought, and so on, endlessly. *Man is a plurality.* Man's name is legion.

"The alternation of I's, their continual obvious struggle for supremacy, is controlled by accidental external influences. Warmth, sunshine, fine weather, immediately call up a whole group of I's. Cold, fog, rain, call up another group of I's, other associations, other feelings, other actions. There is nothing in man able to control this change of I's, chiefly because

man does not notice, or know of it; he lives always in the last I. Some I's, of course, are stronger than others. But it is not their own conscious strength; they have been created by the strength of accidents or mechanical external stimuli. Education, imitation, reading, the hypnotism of religion, caste, and traditions, or the glamour of new slogans, create very strong I's in man's personality, which dominate whole series of other, weaker, I's. But their strength is the strength of the 'rolls' in the centers. And all I's making up a man's personality have the same origin as these 'rolls'; they are the results of external influences; and both are set in motion and controlled by fresh external influences.

"Man has no individuality. He has no single, big I. Man is divided into a multiplicity of small I's.

"And each separate small I is able to call itself by the name of the Whole, to act in the name of the Whole, to agree or disagree, to give promises, to make decisions, with which another I or the Whole will have to deal. This explains why people so often make decisions and so seldom carry them out. A man decides to get up early beginning from the following day. One I, or a group of I's, decide this. But getting up is the business of another I who entirely disagrees with the decision and may even know absolutely nothing about it. Of course the man will again go on sleeping in the morning and in the evening he will again decide to get up early. In some cases this may assume very unpleasant consequences for a man. A small accidental I may promise something, not to itself, but to someone else at a certain moment simply out of vanity or for amusement. Then it disappears, but the man, that is, the whole combination of other I's who are quite innocent of this, may have to pay for it all his life. It is the tragedy of the human being that any small I has the right to sign checks and promissory notes and the man, that is, the Whole, has to meet them. People's whole lives often consist in paying off the promissory notes of small accidental I's.

"Eastern teachings contain various allegorical pictures which endeavor to portray the nature of man's being from this point of view.

"Thus, in one teaching, man is compared to a house in which there is a multitude of servants but no master and no steward. The servants have all forgotten their duties; no one wants to do what he ought; everyone tries to be master, if only for a moment; and, in this kind of disorder, the house is threatened with grave danger. The only chance of salvation is for a group of the more sensible servants to meet together and elect a *temporary* steward, that is, a *deputy steward*. This *deputy steward* can then put the other servants in their places, and make each do his own work: the cook in the kitchen, the coachman in the stables, the gardener in the garden, and so on. In this way the 'house' can be got ready for the arrival of the real steward who will, in his turn, prepare it for the arrival of the master.

"The comparison of a man to a house awaiting the arrival of the master is frequently met with in Eastern teachings which have preserved traces of ancient knowledge, and, as we know, the subject appears under various forms in many of the parables in the Gospels.

"But even the clearest understanding of his possibilities will not bring man any nearer to their realization. In order to realize these possibilities he must have a very strong desire for liberation and be willing to sacrifice everything, to risk everything, for the sake of this liberation."

To this period, that is, to the beginning of the St. Petersburg lectures, are related two interesting talks.

On one occasion I showed G. a photograph I had taken in Benares of a "fakir on nails."

This fakir was not merely a clever juggler like those I saw in Ceylon, although he was undoubtedly a "professional." I had been told that, in the court of the Aurangzeb Mosque on the bank of the Ganges, there was a fakir lying on a bed studded with iron nails. This sounded very mysterious and terrifying. But when I arrived the bed with iron nails alone was there, without the fakir; the fakir, I was told, had gone to fetch the cow. The second time I went the fakir was there. He was not lying on his bed and, so far as I could understand, he only got on it when spectators came. But for a rupee he showed me all his skill. He really did lie almost entirely naked on the bed which was covered with long rather sharp iron nails. And, although he evidently took care not to make any quick movements, he turned round on the nails, lay upon them on his back, his sides, his stomach, and obviously they neither pricked nor scratched him. I took two photographs of him but I could give myself no explanation of the meaning of this phenomenon. The fakir did not produce the impression of being either an intelligent or a religious man. His face wore a dull, bored, and indifferent expression, and there was nothing in him that spoke of aspirations toward self-sacrifice or self-torture.

I told all this to G., showing him the photograph, and I asked him what he thought of it.

"It is difficult to explain in two words," answered G. "First of all the man is not, of course, a 'fakir' in the sense in which I have been using the word. At the same time you are right in thinking it is not altogether a trick. *But he does not know himself how he does it.* If you bribed him and made him tell you what he knows he would probably tell you that he knows *a certain word* which he has to say to himself, after which he is able to lie down on the nails. He might even consent to tell you this word. But it would not help you in the least, because it would be a perfectly ordinary word which would have no effect whatever on you. This man has come from a school, only he was not a disciple. *He was an experiment.* They simply experimented with him and on him. He had

evidently been hypnotized many times and under hypnosis his skin had been rendered first insensitive to pricks and afterwards able to resist them. In a small way this is quite possible even for ordinary European hypnotism. Then afterwards both the insensitiveness and impenetrability of the skin were made permanent in him by means of post-hypnotic suggestion. You know what post-hypnotic suggestion is. A man is put to sleep and told that five hours after he wakes up he must do a certain thing; or he is told to pronounce a certain word and that as soon as he does so he will feel thirsty, or think himself dead, or something like that. Then he is awakened. When the time comes he feels an irresistible desire to do what he was told to do; or, if he remembers the word that was given to him, on pronouncing it he immediately falls into a trance. This is just what was done to your 'fakir.' They accustomed him to lie on nails under hypnosis; then they began to wake him and tell him that if he pronounced a certain word he would again be able to lie down on the nails. This word puts him into a hypnotic state. This is perhaps why he had such a sleepy, apathetic look. This often happens in such cases. They worked on him, perhaps, for many years and then simply let him go, to live as he could. So he put up that iron bed for himself and probably earns a few rupees a week. There are many such men in India. Schools take them for experiment, generally buying them when they are children from parents who gladly sell them because they afterwards profit from it. But of course the man himself does not know or understand what he is doing or how it is done."

This explanation interested me very much because I had never before heard or read an explanation quite like this. In all the attempts to explain "fakirs' miracles" that I had come across, whether the "miracles" were explained as tricks or otherwise, it was always assumed that the performer knew what he was doing and how he did it, and that, if he did not speak of it, it was because he did not want to or was afraid. In the present instance the position was quite different. G.'s explanation seemed to me not only probable but, I dare say, the only one possible. The fakir himself did not know how he worked his "miracle," and, of course, could not have explained it.

On another occasion we were talking of Buddhism in Ceylon. I expressed the opinion that Buddhists *must have magic*, the existence of which they do not acknowledge, and the possibility of which is denied in official Buddhism. Entirely without connection with this remark, and while, I think, I was showing my photographs to G., I spoke about a small shrine in a private house in Colombo in which there was, as usual, a statue of Buddha, and at the foot of the Buddha a small, bell-shaped ivory dagoba, that is, a small carved replica of a dagoba, hollow inside. They opened this in my presence and showed me something inside it

that was regarded as a relic—a small round ball the size of a large shot, carved, as I thought, out of ivory or mother-of-pearl.

G. listened to me attentively.

"Did they not explain to you what this ball meant?" he asked.

"They told me it was a piece of bone of one of Buddha's disciples; that it was of very great antiquity and holiness."

"It is so and it is not so," said G. "The man who showed it to you either did not know or did not want to say. It was not a piece of bone but a particular bone formation which some people get round the neck in the form of a necklace as a result of special exercises. Have you heard the expression 'Buddha's necklace'?"

"Yes," I said, "but this means something quite different. The chain of Buddha's reincarnation is called 'Buddha's necklace.'"

"Yes," said G., "that is one meaning of the expression, but I am speaking of another meaning. This necklace of bones which encircles the neck beneath the skin is directly connected with what is called the 'astral body.' The 'astral body' is, so to speak, attached to it, or, to be more accurate, this 'necklace' connects the physical body to the astral. Now if the 'astral body' continues to live after the death of the physical body, the person possessing a bone of this 'necklace' can always communicate with the 'astral body' of the dead man. This is magic. But they never speak of it openly. You are right about their having magic and this is an instance of it. It does not follow, of course, that the bone you saw was a real one. You will find these bones in almost every house; but I am telling you of the belief which lies at the bottom of this custom."

And again I had to admit that I had never before met with such an explanation.

G. drew a small sketch for me showing the position of the small bones under the skin; they went in a semicircle round the back of the neck, beginning a little in front of the ears.

This sketch at once reminded me of an ordinary diagrammatic representation of the lymphatic glands in the neck, such as can be seen in anatomical charts. But I could learn nothing else about it.

Chapter Four

G.'S LECTURES led to many talks in our groups.

There was still a good deal that was not clear to me, but many things had become connected and one thing often quite unexpectedly explained another which seemed to have no connection with it whatever. Certain parts of the system had already begun vaguely to take shape, like figures or a landscape which gradually appears in the developing of a photographic plate, but many places still remained blank and incomplete. At the same time many things were contrary to what I expected. Only I tried not to come to conclusions but wait. Often one new word that I had not heard before altered the whole picture and I was obliged to rebuild for myself everything I had built up before. I realized very clearly that a great deal of time must pass before I could tell myself that I could outline the whole system correctly. And it was very strange for me to hear how people, after having come to us for one lecture, at once *understood* what we were talking about, explained it to others, and had completely settled and definite opinions about us. I must confess that, at such times, I often recalled my own first meeting with G. and the evening with the Moscow group. I also, at that time, had been very near passing a ready judgment on G. and his pupils. But something had stopped me then. And now, when I had begun to realize what a tremendous value these ideas had, I became almost terrified at the thought of how easily I could have passed them by, how easily I could have known nothing whatever of G.'s existence, or how easily I could have again lost sight of him if I had not asked then whether I could see him again.

In almost every one of his lectures G. reverted to a theme which he evidently considered to be of the utmost importance but which was very difficult for many of us to assimilate.

"There are," he said, "two lines along which man's development proceeds, the line of *knowledge* and the line of *being*. In right evolution the line of knowledge and the line of being develop simultaneously, parallel to, and helping one another. But if the line of knowledge gets too far ahead of the line of being, or if the line of being gets ahead of the line of knowledge, man's development goes wrong, and sooner or later it must come to a standstill.

"People understand what 'knowledge' means. And they understand the possibility of different levels of knowledge. They understand that knowledge may be lesser or greater, that is to say, of one quality or of another quality. But they do not understand this in relation to 'being.' 'Being,' for them, means simply 'existence' to which is opposed just 'non-existence.' They do not understand that being or existence may be of very different levels and categories. Take for instance the being of a mineral and of a plant. It is a different being. The being of a plant and of an animal is again a different being. The being of an animal and of a man is a different being. But the being of two people can differ from one another more than the being of a mineral and of an animal. This is exactly what people do not understand. And they do not understand that *knowledge* depends on *being*. Not only do they not understand this latter but they definitely do not wish to understand it. And especially in Western culture it is considered that a man may possess great knowledge, for example he may be an able scientist, make discoveries, advance science, and at the same time he may be, and has the right to be, a petty, egoistic, caviling, mean, envious, vain, naïve, and absent-minded man. It seems to be considered here that a professor must always forget his umbrella everywhere.

"And yet it is his being. And people think that his knowledge does not depend on his being. People of Western culture put great value on the level of a man's knowledge but they do not value the level of a man's being and are not ashamed of the low level of their own being. They do not even understand what it means. And they do not understand that a man's knowledge depends on the level of his being.

"If knowledge gets far ahead of being, it becomes theoretical and abstract and inapplicable to life, or actually harmful, because instead of serving life and helping people the better to struggle with the difficulties they meet, it begins to complicate man's life, brings new difficulties into it, new troubles and calamities which were not there before.

"The reason for this is that knowledge which is not in accordance with being cannot be large enough for, or sufficiently suited to, man's real needs. It will always be a knowledge of *one thing* together with ignorance of *another thing*; a knowledge of the *detail* without a knowledge of the *whole*; a knowledge of the *form* without a knowledge of the *essence*.

"Such preponderance of knowledge over being is observed in present-day culture. The idea of the value and importance of the level of being is completely forgotten. And it is forgotten that the level of knowledge is determined by the level of being. Actually at a given level of being the possibilities of knowledge are limited and finite. Within the limits of a given being the *quality* of knowledge cannot be changed, and the accumulation of information of one and the same nature, within already