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“Freedom and fatality, liberty and determinism are truths that obtain on different levels of consciousness.”

Questions and Answers 1929–1931 (28 April 1929)

What are these different levels of consciousness?

But I have explained it later on. All that follows is the explanation.

I have already spoken to you of the different planes of consciousness. Well, on the material plane, purely material (when separated from the vital plane), it is an absolute mechanism where consequently all things are linked together; and as I was saying the other day, if you want to find the cause of one thing or what is the result of a thing, you will find another and yet another and you will make an entire tour round the universe. And it is like that, everything is absolutely mechanised. Only, in this purely material plane, there can intervene the vital plane, and it already does intervene in the vegetable kingdom. The vital plane has an altogether different determinism, its own particular determinism. But when you introduce the vital determinism into the determinism of the physical, that produces a kind of combination that changes everything. And above the vital plane there is the mental plane. The mental plane also has its own determinism where all things are linked together rigorously.

But that is the movement which could be called “horizontal”. If you take a vertical movement, the mind descending into the vital and the vital descending into the physical, you have there three determinisms that intervene and naturally produce something altogether different. And where the mind has intervened the determinism will necessarily be different from the one where it does not intervene; that is, in the higher animal life

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there is already a mental determinism which intervenes that is altogether different from the determinism of the vegetable plane.

Above these planes there are others—above each plane there are others, following one another right up to the highest plane. The highest plane is the plane of absolute freedom. If in your consciousness you are capable of passing through all these planes, so to say in a vertical line, and reaching the highest plane and, by means of this connection, of bringing down this plane of perfect freedom into the material determinisms, you change everything. And all the intermediaries change everything. Then because of the very changes from level to level, it gives altogether the appearance of complete freedom; for the intervention or descent of one plane into another has unforeseen consequences for the other plane, the lower plane. The higher plane can foresee, but the lower ones cannot. So, as these consequences are unforeseen, that gives altogether the impression of the unexpected and of freedom. And it is only if you remain consciously and constantly on the highest level, that is, in the supreme Consciousness, that there you can see that, at the same time, all is absolutely determined but also, because of the complexity of the interlinking of these determinisms, all is absolutely free. It is the Plane where there are no more contradictions, where all things *are* and are in harmony without contradicting one another.

In the lower planes can't one say what will happen at a particular moment?

That depends. On certain planes there are consciousnesses that form, that make formations and try to send them down to earth and manifest them. These are planes where the great forces are at play, forces struggling with each other to organise things in one way or another. On these planes all the possibilities are there, all the possibilities that present themselves but have not yet come to a decision as to which will come down.... Suppose a plane full of the imaginations of people who want certain things

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to be realised upon earth — they invent a novel, narrate stories, produce all kinds of phenomena; it amuses them very much. It is a plane of form-makers and they are there imagining all kinds of circumstances and events; they play with the forces; they are like the authors of a drama and they prepare everything there and see what is going to happen. All these formations are facing each other; and it is those which are the strongest, the most successful or the most persistent or those that have the advantage of a favourable set of circumstances which dominate. They meet and out of the conflict yet another thing results: you lose one thing and take up another, you make a new combination; and then all of a sudden, you find, pluff! it is coming down. Now, if it comes down with a sufficient force, it sets moving the earth atmosphere and things combine; as for instance, when with your fist you thump the saw-dust, you know surely what happens, don't you? You lift your hand, give a formidable blow: all the dust gets organised around your fist. Well, it is like that. These formations come down into matter with that force, and everything organises itself automatically, mechanically as around the striking fist. And there's your wished object about to be realised, sometimes with small deformations because of the resistance, but it will be realised finally, even as the person narrating the story up above wanted it more or less to be realised. If then you are for some reason or other in the secret of the person who has constructed the story and if you follow the way in which he creates his path to reach down to the earth and if you see how a blow with the fist acts on earthly matter, then you are able to tell what is going to happen, because you have seen it in the world above, and as it takes some time to make the whole journey, you see in advance. And the higher you rise, the more you foresee in advance what is going to happen. And if you pass far beyond, go still farther, then everything is possible.

It is an unfolding that follows a wide road which is for you unknowable; for all will be unfolded in the universe, but in what order and in what way? There are decisions that are taken

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up there which escape our ordinary consciousness, and so it is very difficult to foresee. But there also, if you enter consciously and if you can be present up there... How shall I explain that to you? All is there, absolute, static, eternal: but all that will be unfolded in the material world, naturally more or less one thing after another; for in the static existence all can be there, but in the becoming all becomes in time, that is, one thing after another. Well, what path will the unfolding follow? Up there is the domain of absolute freedom.... Who says that a sufficiently sincere aspiration, a sufficiently intense prayer is not capable of changing the path of the unfolding?

This means that all is possible.

Now, one must have a sufficient aspiration and a prayer that's sufficiently intense. But that has been given to human nature. It is one of the marvellous gifts of grace given to human nature; only, one does not know how to make use of it.

This comes to saying that in spite of the most absolute determinisms in the horizontal line, if one knows how to cross all these horizontal lines and reach the highest Point of consciousness, one is able to make things change, things apparently absolutely determined. So you may call it by any name you like, but it is a kind of combination of an absolute determinism with an absolute freedom. You may pull yourself out of it in any way you like, but it is like that.

I forgot to say in that book (perhaps I did not forget but just felt that it was useless to say it) that all these theories are only theories, that is, mental conceptions which are merely more or less imaged representations of the reality; but it is not the reality at all. When you say "determinism" and when you say "freedom", you say only words and all that is only a very incomplete, very approximate and very weak description of what is in reality within you, around you and everywhere; and to be able to begin to understand what the universe is, you must come out of your mental formulas, otherwise you will never understand anything.

To tell the truth, if you live only a moment, just a tiny

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moment, of this absolutely sincere aspiration or this sufficiently intense prayer, you will know more things than by meditating for hours.

“The Supreme Consciousness... gives to the individual in the active life of the world his sense of freedom and independence and initiative. These things in him are Her pragmatic tools or devices and it is through this machinery that the movements and issues planned and foreseen elsewhere are realised here.”

Questions and Answers 1929–1931 (28 April 1929)

These “things in him”, that is in the individual, are: the sense of freedom, independence and initiative. You know what independence is? It is precisely the freedom of choice. Independence means the freedom of choice and initiative means the fact of choosing. First of all, one feels that one is free; and then one feels that no one can prevent him from choosing; and finally one uses his freedom to choose and one decides. These are the three stages. So these three stages: the feeling that you are free, the idea that you are going to use your freedom for choosing and then the choice — these three things I call the pragmatic tools and devices.

I am sorry, my children, all this is said in a form a little too philosophical which I do not now approve of very much. I was obliged to speak a language which now appears to me a little too complicated. But what is to be done, it was like that. I was saying that these three things, the feeling of freedom, the will to choose and the choice made are the devices that Nature uses in us to make us act, otherwise we would not move.

If we did not have this illusion that we are free, this second illusion that we can use our freedom for choosing and the third illusion of choosing, well, we would not move. So Nature gives us these three illusions and makes us move, for she requires us to move.

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She, with a capital S, I said it was the Supreme Consciousness, but in fact it is Nature and it is the trick of Nature; for the Supreme Consciousness has no tricks, it is Nature that has tricks. The Supreme Consciousness quite simply enters into all things with all her consciousness, because it is *the* consciousness: and with that She tries to make all this inconscience move towards consciousness, simply, without any tricks. She has no need of tricks, She is everywhere. She is at work everywhere and She puts consciousness into the inconscience. When you light a lamp in a dark room, as soon as you turn on the electricity, the room is no longer dark. As soon as you put consciousness in, there is no longer any unconsciousness. So that is what She does. Wherever She sees unconsciousness, She tries to enter. Sometimes the doors are locked, then it takes a little more time, but sometimes the doors open, then She rushes in immediately, the unconsciousness disappears and consciousness comes — without needing any tricks or any intermediaries. She becomes conscious. But material Nature, physical Nature is not like that, she is full of tricks; she makes you move all the time, she pulls the puppet strings; for her you are so many little dolls: she pulls the strings and makes them move. She puts all kinds of illusions in your head so that you may do the things she wants, without even your wanting it. She does not require that you should want it: she pulls the thread and you do it.

That is why we quarrel at times, but don't tell anyone!

You have said here that we are “tied to the chain of Karma”, but then sometimes when the Divine Grace acts, that contradicts...

Completely, the Divine Grace completely contradicts Karma; you know, It makes it melt away like butter that's put in the sun.

That is what I was saying just now. What you have just told me is another way of speaking. I was putting myself in your place and asking: There you are, if you have an aspiration that's

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sincere enough or a prayer that's intense enough, you can bring down in you Something that will change everything, everything — truly it changes everything. An example may be given that is extremely limited, very small, but which makes you understand things very well: a stone falls quite mechanically; say, a tile falls; if it gets loose, it will fall, won't it? But if there comes, for example, a vital or mental determinism from someone who passes by and does not want it to fall and puts his hand out, it will fall on his hand, but it will not fall on the ground. So he has changed the destiny of this stone or tile. It is another determinism that has come in, and instead of the stone falling on the head of someone, it falls upon the hand and it will not kill anybody. This is an intervention from another plane, from a conscious will that enters into the more or less unconscious mechanism.

So the consequences of Karma are not rigorous?

No, not at all. In all religions there are people who have said that, who have given such absolute rules, but I believe it was in order to substitute themselves for Nature and pull the strings. There is always this kind of instinct that wants to take the place of Nature and pull the strings of people. So they are told: "There is an absolute consequence of all that you do...." It is a concept necessary at a given moment of evolution to prevent people from being in a completely unconscious egoism, in a total unconsciousness of the consequences of what they do. There is no lack of people who are still like that, I believe it is the majority; they follow their impulses and do not even ask themselves whether what they have done is going to have any consequences for them and for others. So it is good that someone tells you straight, with a severe look: "Take care, that has consequences which will last for a very long time!" And then there are others who come and tell you: "You will pay for it in another life." That, however, is one of those fantastic stories.... But it does not matter: this also

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can be for the good of people. There are other religions which tell you: “Oh! If you commit that sin, you will go to hell for eternity.” You can imagine!... So people have such a fright that it stops them a little, it gives them just a moment for reflection before obeying an impulse — and not always; sometimes the reflection comes afterwards, a little late.

It is not absolute. These are still mental constructions, more or less sincere, which cut things into small bits like that, quite neatly cut, and tell you: “Do this or do that. If it is not this, it will be that.” Oh! what a nuisance is this kind of life. And so people go mad, they are frightened! “Is it like that or rather this?” And they want it to be neither this nor that, what should they do? — They have only to climb to a higher storey. They must be given the key to open the door. There is a door to the staircase, a key is needed. The key, as I told you just now, is the sufficiently sincere aspiration or the sufficiently intense prayer. I said “or”, but I do not think it is “or”. There are people who like one better and others, the other. But in both there is a magical power, you must know how to make use of it.

There is something very beautiful in both, I shall speak to you about it one day, I shall tell you what there is in aspiration and what in prayer and why both of them are beautiful.... Some dislike prayer; if they entered deep into their heart, they would find it was pride — worse than that, vanity. And then there are those who have no aspiration, they try and they cannot aspire; it is because they do not have the flame of the will, it is because they do not have the flame of humility.

Both are needed. There must be a very great humility and a very great will to change one’s Karma.

Voilà, au revoir, my children.