

THE SCIENTIST'S CONVERSATIONS
WITH THE TEACHER



Science and Esoterics

by Alexander Zelitchenko

*translated from Russian into English by Christine Sever
(Conversations 3-21) and Robert Shillenn (Conversations 1,2)*

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The scientist's Conversations with the Teacher
Science and Esoterics

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For information address:
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5220 S 16th, Ste. 200
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www.iuniverse.com

zelitchenk@yahoo.com zelitchenk@aol.com

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In memory of Igor' Yuganov, Kherri

“The cosmonauts flew into space and they did not see any god there.”

From the “atheistic propaganda” of the first teacher of the scientist M. E. N. (age 50-55)
Moscow, 1964 or 65 or 66

“I cannot find any way to fit both God and the universe into my mind.”

Statement of an acquaintance of the scientist N. G. (age 12)
Moscow region, 1998

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Thank You, Who lead me through this work, Who give me ability not only to listen Teacher but to hear Him, Who create favourable conditions, and most important, introduce in my life such a wife as Katya, co-author in everything.

CONVERSATION ONE IN LIEU
OF A FOREWORD
CONCERNING EMERGING FROM
THE “GLOOMY FOREST”

scientist (s.): Now it is simply laughable to recall how silly it was. I had known you for so long, but I had listened so seldom and heard so little. I just didn't have any time, or else “everything was obvious,” so I thought.

A few years ago I began to get smarter. It was then that, at last, I began to have the ability to calmly deal with two questions. Even long before that, I felt that without those questions my work in psychology was becoming meaningless.

The first question was: why is it that man, when you look at him through the prism of scientific psychology, seems to be a lifeless and mechanical puppet? And the second was: how can this puppet be brought to life?

This began my search for what is human in man. Quickly this search turned the two original questions into questions like what is love, beauty, religious sentiment, creative striving? Dealing with this scientifically, of course, was impossible for me. Instead, perhaps, first of all, I suddenly

sensed that the scientific approach is a fog in which I cannot see things as they are.

And then... Then I began looking deeper, striving to be as free of bias as possible. And suddenly, in the fog, the outlines of some picture began to emerge. And the clearer that picture became, the more clearly I began to understand that it was changing my whole life.

Out of all this, the main thing was that I saw is that God exists.

It was then that I understood, after thirty some years of study and scientific work, that I knew nothing. I was going to have to study all over again. And I began to seek after meetings with you.

Now that I can no longer imagine life without these meetings, more and more I want to share with others what I am finding out. Will you allow me this?

Teacher (T.): If you write down exactly what you hear.

s. But that is impossible! How can I accurately transmit YOU?

Inevitably I will distort something, somewhere I will lose its depth, somewhere I will fall into ad-libbing. There is something I will leave out. Somewhere I will put into your mouth my own thoughts, to make them more impressive. I certainly "err" in some way...?"

T. Then don't write.

s. And keep ALL THIS to myself, for my own "personal use"?!

And there's more... And the words of the medieval Russian ascetic are echoing in my mind, words that Pavel Florenskiy adopted as the epigraph of his most important book. My "little mind," so people will say, is weak, and I am unworthy and I ought not dare. All this is true, and I freely admit it. But if I do not write, then who will?

The most important thing, you see, it seems I can no longer help but to write...

T. Then your question was just false modesty. So write; but write the best you can.

s. Of course, I am willing to try. But how will it turn out?

I mean, when I understood that the world is not the way most people consider it to be, two new questions arose, one theoretical, namely if the world is not like what people think, what is it like? The other, a practical one, was how should one live in a world that is “not like what people think”? I no longer understood who I was and what was happening to me and around me, or what I should do. I, like the Dante’s hero, “found myself in a gloomy forest,” and not only did I not know how to find my way out, but I did not even know who to ask for directions.

Later I figured that you were my Virgil. So what is your answer to the main question, “how do I get out of the forest?”

T. First, you must figure out what has happened in you.

In reality, what has happened was an important event: the beginning of your Initiation.

s. What do you mean by Initiation?

T. Imagine a pyramid with steps. On its highest level there is drawn a Small Circle, while around the base there is a large circle.

In the large circle are ordinary people, while in the Small Circle there are non-ordinary people, the Initiates.

Initiation is a huge Stairway, the steps of which are formed by the gradations of the pyramid. By this stairway aspirants ascend out the circle of ordinary people to the Circle of the Initiates.

s. How are these initiates unusual?

T. First of all, they are not “those” people. They are in every way greater than you are. Just as for “God,” “Initiation” and “Initiates” must be said and written with a capital letter.

The Initiates are unusual in that, in them, there is fully developed what is not developed in you at all: awareness. Awareness provides Initiates with the fullest of knowledge possible for man, and also with the ability, absent in an ordinary person, to do what you know. But this applies to genuine Initiates. There are very few of them, and it is doubtful that you have ever met any.

s. That means that Initiation is the process of transforming an ordinary man into an Initiate. And was the thing that changed my life Initiation?

T. It has only begun to change; you are still at the very bottom of the Stairway of Initiation. But the ascent will be long and difficult, and it will really change both your life and your very self.

s. That means my Initiation began when I guessed that the World is “not like what people think...”

But what do I need to do to ascend to the top of the pyramid?

T. First, you need to ascend to the first step.

s. The first step? What's that?

T. Each step is defined by three aspects: the level of awareness, the level of existence that corresponds to the level of awareness and the ideas that give meaning to that level of existence. And new ideas about the World and about yourself are what you need first and foremost.

s. Why ideas? Why not existence? As I see it, I have already done enough “cogitating”; it would nice to begin DOING something...

T. In order to do, you must know what to do and how. Otherwise, anything you do, whether it's praying or fasting, practicing yoga or seeking out a guru, teaching or healing, writing books or “maintaining” your “special experiences” (no matter what they are? tenderness, exaltation, inspiration, “mystical experiences,” and no matter how you do this? using drugs or practicing exercises, or any other way), nothing will work for you. More precisely, everything will turn out badly.

s. That is the way it looks. Maybe doing things wrong is precisely what has robbed me of joy, both the highest and the simplest kind of joy. Life has lost its color, as though I were “forsaken by God.”

And how do I get out of this state?

T. Joylessness is precisely what is nudging you toward the way out; it forces you to look for the causes of failures. This search quickly uncovers ignorance.

s. I have already uncovered it, the fact that I do not know HOW to act. What's more, I do not even know WHAT to do.

I have been overcome by complete disorientation, as when it seems that you are rolling down a cliff...

T. Actually you are rolling upward. True, the questions “what should I do and how?” are still not answers. But the answers are based precisely on those same new ideas that are indispensable for you and without which there is no way to recognize what to do or how.

s. But won't the search for ideas distract me from something more important?

T. That's possible.

Because not only does acting demand new ideas, but assimilating the new ideas is supported by acting. As you ascend the Stairway of Initiation, ideas and acting are two legs; you shift your weight from one to the other.

s. Exactly. I started out with attempts to make sense of mental action that had not made any sense before—I began to understand what had previously been unattainable. For this new ideas were required of me. After this, I tried to realize these ideas in practice, it was like “bumping into walls.”

But so now, to figure out what has happened and what to do next, I need new ideas? What? Just so that, in realizing those ideas, I can “bump into walls” again?

T. If you want, yes. But these will be a new kind of “walls.”

s. And what new ideas are absolutely necessary for me? Is it possible to formulate these thoughts concisely?

T. It's possible, only there is very little you will understand.

s. But still, I would like to hear them.

T. Listen. Only do not try to remember it all. All lot of this will still be nothing but words for you.

First. The world is “bigger” than it seems. Besides the world of things, which is the coarsest, there are more subtle worlds. These subtle worlds exist “here and now.” Just like the world of things, the subtle worlds are material: each one is formed by material of a particular subtlety.

Second. Each part of the World—from the Most Subtle Thing to the coarsest one and from the All-encompassing to the tiniest thing—is a triune entity, or a triad “Idea (incarnated by a thing)-Thing-Being (that realizes the idea and makes the thing).” Triads form the World Hierarchy of ideas-things-beings.

Third. Any triad—from the World as a whole to Its tiniest part—develops. Development is the Cycle of the Spirit: what is subtle develops into what is coarse, while what is coarse develops into what is subtle.

Fourth. As a being, each triad in the Hierarchy works in its own workplace and works together with other beings. Being has instruments—organs—for working with materials of varying subtlety. The organs make up bodies. Beings that possess sufficiently subtle bodies are intelligent and even Super-intelligent.

Fifth. Man has three bodies: a spiritual one, a mental one and a physical one. Man's task is to realize special “human” ideas, which are initially foreign to him, but when they are realized, they become part of himself. This process of assimilation culminates when one comes to spiritual awareness, which is a special spiritual transformation of man, something that is rare in ordinary life. The development of man is a development of spiritual awareness.

Sixth. In order to develop, man needs to purify himself, from time to time, from the by-products of the realization of ideas. This purification is death. Death is not an end, but a change in the manner of existence. Death turns man into another being, but it does not stop development.

Seventh. Man's fate provides him with the best conditions for working and developing in the Cycle of the Spirit.

s. Yes...Not remembering all that will be easy. Actually, to put it mildly, I did not understand everything. But it does seem that I have read something similar before.

But besides I did not understand, much of what you have said sounds very questionable.

Are these ideas true? And, if so, then why are they so different from both scientific and generally accepted views? How can you check on whether they are true? Or do you just have to believe in them? Or, perhaps, most importantly, even if they are true, what do all these ideas “provide for life”?

T. And so you will easily acknowledge that you are casting doubt on what you do not even understand.

Yet you do not notice that your doubts are the flip side of non-understanding?

s. Well then, how do I arrive at understanding?

T. First of all, you must know what you are doubting other than in the form of theses. However, in order to unravel theses of “doubtful ideas,” you need to see the picture of the real world, in which “dissimilar” views peacefully coexist. In this picture there is no room for your doubts.

s. And does such a picture exist? Can you show it to me?

T. Yes. But that will not be of much help to you. Showing is not enough; you must see it yourself. And this involves a lot of work.

s. As I see it, that is precisely what we will undertake to do.

But, couldn't you dissipate even a few of my doubts right now?

T. “Right now” the only thing you must know is that there is no need to “just believe in” anything.

PART I

▼

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT KNOWLEDGE
OR ESOTERIC GNOSEOLOGY

Conversation Two
Concerning the Anatomy of Knowledge

s. Teacher! I have long understood how powerless science is. Scientific knowledge does not bring people closer to understanding life. Science does not offer any answers either to universal questions such as “how should people live?” or to individual ones such as “How and what am I going to eat?” or “How can I keep healthy?” In general, there are few important questions to which science gives a precise answer.

Science does not do any better with the most important questions that are “properly scientific” ones. Science does not know what space is, or time, or matter. Or what life is. And, of course, it does not know what “ideal realities” are, such as soul, spirit or beauty.

That is why I have become so interested in the alternative to scientific knowledge, secret or esoteric knowledge. I wanted to gain access to this knowledge and, naturally, I began with the study of the literature. I turned out that there is a multitude of esoteric books. I at once tasted the Truth in them. In a few of them, especially the ancient ones, it seemed, all Truth was hidden within them.

But, although I devoured book after book, and I thought I understood something, I quickly discovered that I was getting bogged down in contradictions, understatements, obscure allusions, fanciful terminology and all the other "enticements" of esoteric literature, while esoteric knowledge remained fascinating, it was still just as inaccessible. What I was reading contradicted everything that I had known before; it looked unproven and unprovable, and often even completely useless. Of course, I would have given up this reading, were it not for the taste of Truth. That never disappeared!

When I discovered that different books deal differently even with questions such as the existence of God, the essence of evolution, immortality and the immortal destiny of the soul, the content of karmic laws, not to mention more individual questions, I got the feeling that I had gotten completely entangled and no longer understood: not that the books were poor, or that I was deficient, just because I was unable to extract from them that Truth, the taste of which was tantalizing me so intensely?

T. And you cannot even understand this.

s. Why?

T. You are not ready. Here you are asking about esoteric knowledge, and you don't even know what "simply knowledge" is. You want to understand, but you do not even understand what "understanding" is.

You are putting together sentences out of words, but you do not understand the meaning of either the words or the sentences. Look, the last time you asked, "what do ideas, so different from both scientific and generally accepted views contribute to life?" Of course, you will not understand this

until you understand what is meant by “contribute to life” and what “scientific and generally accepted views” are.

s. Then, how should I prepare myself?

T. For this it is necessary for you to pass through a series of rooms, and at the end you...

s. Will see the light? Or the picture you promised?

T. No, at the end you will simply be able to see.

s. What kind of rooms are these?

T. This is the anatomical museum of knowledge: rooms, in which you will recognize, what is meant by “knowledge,” “idea,” “truth and falsehood,” “representation,” “thought” and “understanding.”

s. It seems to me I know all of that...

And you are demanding that this knowledge be revised? But this means not only cogitating, but getting into abstractions with my head; a kind of Scholastic scientism, something I’ve been trying to get away from.

And so, is this so indispensable? Can’t I immediately get to the heart of the matter, without all these “rooms,” without beating around the bush?

T. No, you can’t. Without these step, you won’t be ready to look at the picture. And you will not see anything in the picture. But there’s no need for you plunge into “Scholastic scientism.”

s. Besides, I’m afraid of scaring away the reader; not everyone will enjoy dry discussions on academic matters or even put up with them...

T. And not everyone will be enthralled by you?

And where did you get the idea that your book must be read by everyone. The matters of further discussion are so much complex than these quite simple questions. These questions present a hurdle that is not so high. And anyone who is determined to press forward, must jump that hurdle. And for anyone who cannot or will not overcome this hurdle, it much too early to be interested in the more complex questions.

And you should not count on universal approval; even if you manage to make it so that the discussions are not so “dry.”

PART 3

THE HUMAN'S PATH OR ESOTERIC
ANTHROPOLOGY

Conversation Fourteen
Concerning the Human Being in the
Picture of the World

s. Teacher! You have revealed to me a really startling picture! I feel like I have just recovered my sight!

Our entire culture is permeated with the spirit of anthropocentrism: a human being is the crown, so as not to say the “umbilicus,” of Creation. The ideas and values of humanism are “the best” and are, in any case, indisputable.

But in fact, a human being is only one of the beings, whose position is far from the main one, somewhere “in the background” of the Hierarchy, and who has a small and precisely defined role in the Circle of Spirit. His

participation in the work of Creation begins only when the most subtle First Matter of Spirit is “condensed” up to the level of psychical matter. He is not only not the “hand” or the “eye,” but is not even the “hand of the hand” and not the “eye of the eye,” but only, perhaps, the “hand of the hand of the hand” or the “eye of the eye of the eye” of God. This is like a cold shower...

Hmmm...There is much to think about...

But, nevertheless...No matter how peripheral a human being's place in the Hierarchy is, for me the subject of the human being is central: I need to know everything about him, and as detailed and as precisely as possible. And, first of all, I need to see a human being in the “movie.” By the way, why haven't I seen him there?

T. Because a human being is too small and transient.

s. Oh, I understand! That means it is necessary to “move the projector up to the screen” and to roll the “movie” more slowly. May I see this slowed-down movie?

T. Yes.

s. Ah, now everything has actually become slower and closer. At the lower edge of the world of clouds a small cloud appears, and from it a very tiny cloud. And a dance begins. The little cloud spills a colorfall. The colorfall freezes and turns into someone that looks like a human being. Everything happens so rapidly that it is difficult to understand. This is not quite exactly a human being. But it is very like one. A kind of “anthropoid.” Now the anthropoid melts, and only the colorfall remains. But already it is a little different. And now even the colorfall evaporates. The little cloud remains. Something in it has also changed. Now it spills a new colorfall. And it freezes into a new anthropoid. This one also melts. Again the colorfall. The little cloud. The colorfall. The anthropoid. The colorfall...

A marionette dances on a thread. And all the time they are changing: the marionette—anthropoid, the thread—colorfall, and the hand holding the

thread—cloud. Now the dance ends and the little cloud is devoured by the bigger cloud. And is that all?

T. That is all.

s. How strange! I am not even sure that the anthropoid that I saw was a human being, and not a chimpanzee, for example. Perhaps it was still very fast. May I see it again, a little more slowly?

T. Yes.

s. The same dance. Only slow and ceremonious. But now I see in it the life of some luminous, exotic plant.

The little cloud shines brightly and beautifully—it is more like a light than a cloud. And the colorfalls and anthropoids created by the cloud/light do not disappear without a trace. They leave traces that look like the white trail that remains behind a jet airplane. All together these traces look like seaweed twisting under the water. Not even seaweed—a giant root system: some streams flow through the roots to the bud—the cloud/light.

Old “roots” are darker; young ones are brighter. This is because streams also run from the cloud/light through the “roots.” Streams of light. And when the little cloud spills a colorfall, and when the colorfall freezes into an anthropoid, light flows from the little cloud through the colorfall, and then through the anthropoid. But it does not illuminate them as a whole, only the upper parts. And the more new colorfalls and anthropoids appear, the larger these illuminated parts become and the brighter the newly-appearing colorfalls and anthropoids become.

And now an extremely bright colorfall appears. And its anthropoid is also completely flooded with light. And the colorfalls and the anthropoid pour into the cloud/light. And then the light flares up into a bright fire. It does not just flare up—it blossoms into a fiery rose that grows in an upper, mother cloud. God! How beautiful!

And even more slowly—almost stopping? From the time the anthropoid appears. Can I see it?

T. Yes.

s. A road.

It begins in a round plaza. Like a circus arena. A ray of light falls into the "arena." A gong is struck. Other, variegated rays blaze up. And another dance begins—some strange dance of light and color. No, it is not a dance. It is teamwork. The rays are doing something together...

Here, at last, their work is ending. And a strange being appears in the "arena." Yes, it is the anthropoid! Now the similarities and the differences between him and a human being become apparent. This is actually a human being. But quite unusual—not a "single," but a "triple" one: three "persons," one within the other.

The most interior one—an ordinary child—is within the person, whose body, like a huge drop, constantly changes its form. And the human-drop is within an "air-human" with a body resembling a cloud. That very cloud that spills the colorfall. And that very colorfall is the human-drop. The air-human is quite transparent. However, he is "light but strong": he directs the human-drop, and the human-drop obeys the air-human, although not in everything. And the human-drop directs the child. But "directs" is not exactly correct. It is more like the air-human "flows into" the human-drop, and the human-drop "flows into" the child; each filling the next with himself, and thus each conveys to the next his own will and his own movements.

Now the triple person is sent on the path. A very beautiful, but very strange, landscape surrounds him. But it is not a landscape. It is more like the ocean. And the person swims in it. But it is not exactly thus: the person is not separate from the "ocean." Especially in his "drop" and "air" parts.

The ocean (or possibly, not ocean) is very active; it is simply a Valley of Geysers: everything is seething and boiling. Streams of sparks (or splashes) fly to the person, and he himself splashes out streams of sparks. Some streams, like a favorable wind, urge him on; others, like a head wind, impede him. The person seems to be free. But some directions are closed to him, and others, on the contrary, like a vortex, draw him in. There are

streams that bounce off the person. And others penetrate within and change him. Some streams strengthen him and others destroy him.

At the beginning the person moves (walks or possibly swims) rather slowly through a narrow tunnel. No, not through a tunnel, through a deep gorge. Now the gorge expands and turns into a canyon. The person's speed increases. The canyon becomes ever wider. Now it is a valley. Again it narrows. The speed continues to increase. Here is a fork. It is possible to turn to the right or to the left. Another fork. The person chooses his path. And moves forward faster and faster.

Little by little, the person changes. The human-drop becomes denser. The air-human is filled more and more with "vital juices." He is already not so frail and ghostly as at the beginning. And the child grows up. He ages. And...disappears. And the person is transformed from "three-part" to "two-part." Now I see only his back. He is going away somewhere...Farther and farther...

Is that all?

T. Is it still not enough?

s. Rather, too much...

So, above all, I understood that a human being "flows out" and "flows into" not the Absolute, but a being much less perfected, although incomparably more perfected, than he himself. He takes his individuality from that being at the beginning and returns it to the same being at the end, dissolving, as a drop of rain dissolves into a river. Who is this being?

T. It is enough for you to understand that He is more than a human being in everything. You can call Him "Proto-human."

s. Thus, the final point of the human being's journey is not God. A human being retains his individuality only until he dissolves in the Proto-human. And this occurs when the individual idea of the human being is completely realized. Good. Then another question.

I saw in the "movie" that the human being's path is the sequence of transformations: the colorfall turns into the anthropoid; the anthropoid turns into the colorfall; the colorfall into the little cloud and so forth. The

moments of these transformations, as I understand, are the moments of death. But then moments of death are at the same time moments of birth: the death of one being begets another. The “incorporeal” life of the colorfall ends in the birth of the human being. The death of the human being is the birth of another “incorporeal” colorfall. But the human being, his predecessor, and his successor have a common core—a growing air-human.

But why are death and rebirth necessary? What are these “breaks of continuity” in development?

T. Death helps you stop knowing what you know and stop doing what you know how to do.

s. Do I understand you correctly, that experience that is accumulated in development ages, loses its usefulness and begins to become harmful?

T. Exactly. Changes in the world require new knowledge and new skills.

s. That is, although experience is necessary both for adaptation and for work in the Circle of Spirit, old experience is useless under new conditions. And it is necessary to be delivered from it. Its preservation would require an unproductive expenditure of energy. As if energy-information channels “are obstructed,” and their capacity diminishes. The same as with the aging of the physical body. Is that right?

Y. Yes.

s. But development requires expansion of experience, does it not? It is usual to consider an experienced person more developed.

T. As you already know, development is the realization of an individual idea. And experience is the trace of its realization, a by-product of development. Someone may have a lot of experience and remain an undeveloped child.

s. Understood...

Of course, I still have a million questions. But one of them is the most important. This question is about life after death. I can beat about the bush no longer—I need maximum clarity! But is it possible? In regard to

this question it is only possible to trust or not trust one or another authority. There is no other proof...

T. There are others. For example, your intuition. But above all, your experience.

s. My experience?!

T. Yours.

s. But in order to be blessed with this experience, it is necessary to die!

T. Not necessarily.

s. You mean that I can be convinced of the reality of life after death by experience right now?!

T. Not right away. In order to recollect such experience, you need some time.

Conversation Fifteen
Concerning the scientist's "After-Death"
Experience (Monologue-Amarcord)

s. I began to search. And, surprisingly, I indeed managed to gather quite a few experiential confirmations of "life after death." Here they are.

Childhood

The earliest recollection. Some relative from Leningrad, my mother's first cousin once removed, or second cousin, I do not know—I never saw him again—is giving me a silver dessert spoon. I clearly remember my self-perception—my self-perception was that of an adult. Many years later I found out that at that time I was less than a year old.

Until I was five or six years old, it seemed to me that I had been living for a very long time. I often spoke of "my whole life" or "never in my life," which greatly amused those around me. This was not imitation of adults

his life cut off in a surge of spiritual growth? Why did he not finish on Earth so much of what he could have finished? And so forth. The most varied answers came to mind: from Swedenborg's formula, "Each receives as much of God's Grace as he is capable of accepting," to thoughts that his striving for the astral world made his life on Earth (at least now) useless. Perhaps someday later...

Thoughts, thoughts...And afterwards, not forty days after his death, but much later, I felt that our connection was not broken. I do not dream of him. It is difficult for me to explain. But we are connected as before. And as before, as it always was, I mentally turn to him when I am writing. And I try to answer the questions that he could ask me. And to say something important for him. Although, of course, I do not know what is important for him now. On the whole, I know nothing of him, except what was clear to me from the very beginning—he is, he continues to be.

When two people are as close as we were, mutual enrichment is an everyday occurrence. But it turned out that he enriched me with his death. Too high a price...

Our relationships, colored with some Hemmingway touches, as the majority of male friendships in our generation, excluded open expression of feelings. And I never could tell him how dear he was to me and what an important role he plays in my life and my work.

I am saying this to you now, here.

Good journey, Kherri!!!

Conversation Sixteen **Concerning a Human Being's Development**

s. It is difficult now to return to a calm dry tone. But our conversation requires rationality. I have understood the burning issue. Indeed, my

experience confirms more than refutes the reality of “life beyond the grave.” But, for the rest...

So many questions! I am dazzled—I do not know which one to ask first. The main thing is—there is no overriding principle. There is no bar from which one can take questions and string answers. Or context into which one can load knowledge about a human being. That is probably my main question...

T. This “principle,” “bar,” and “context” is development.

s. But in order to speak of development it is necessary to know what is developing. What is a human being in his various “poses.” I understand that a human being is a triad, “Idea-Being-Thing.” But what is this idea? What is the being? And what is the thing?

But first of all, the idea. What is the individual idea of a human being, besides that it is the “daughter” of the idea of Proto-human?

T. In order to understand what the individual idea of a human being is, it is necessary to begin not with it. It is necessary to begin with the background against which it exists and from which it is “fashioned”—from other “human” ideas.

s. Do you mean those colored rays from the “movie,” which jointly create a human being?

T. Not only that. Also, the streams of sparks or splashes that the worlds pour over the already-created human being.

s. What are they—these “human” ideas?

T. They are very many and various. Above all, you need to know the main ones: the idea of the path, the idea of the zone of responsibility, and the idea of the structure of a human being.

The idea of the human path is the idea of a great journey from Proto-human to Proto-human. Which consists of many small ones.

The idea of the zone of human responsibility in the Circle of Spirit is to transform some “human” idea-things into others by his own human methods in the three coarsest worlds.

The idea of human structure is that a human being is a three-level thing and a being with three bodies.

s. The first two seem clear to me. But I would like to focus on the last idea. I have many questions about it. And I think they are important ones.

So, the “air-human,” the “human-drop” and the “ordinary human being” in the movie—are these the three bodies?

T. This is how to see them. As “knots of matter” they are not bodies, but “human things,” levels of the multi-level thing, human being. But as “ACTING persons,” as “transformers,” and as organ systems, they are bodies. Bodies are their actions.

s. What bodies and what human things are they?

T. An “ordinary human being” is a physical body. A “human-drop” is a subtle body, or soul (In the Russian original text, there are two words translated as “soul”: the noun *dusha* and its derived adjective *dushevnyi*. *Dusha* refers to the core entity of the human being that animates the human's body [*anima*—Latin] and continues to exist after the person's death. This concept is similar to the archaic meaning of the English word “soul” [including mind and heart, as well as the religious concept of soul]. Thus, the word “soul” in this translation refers to a broader concept than the word ordinarily denotes.—trans.). And an “air-human” is a super-subtle, spiritual body, or soul of the soul.

s. Why do you define these particular bodies?

T. After the conversation about the number of subtle worlds, that is a meaningless question.

s. That is, the number of bodies a person has is determined by the number of worlds in which he lives. Since we “allotted” three worlds for a human being—the world of substance, the world of human energies, and the world of meanings and reasons—that means that a human being also has three bodies. So the subtle bodies, the soul and the spirit, continue the anatomical sequence: skeleton, soft tissues, circulatory system, etc. Is that right?

T. No. The sequence that the bodies continue cannot be anatomical. Human things—“soul as thing” and “spirit as thing”—continue the anatomical sequence. Subtle bodies—“soul as body” and “spirit as body”—continue the physiological sequence.

s. That is: muscle contractions, blood circulation, breathing, biophysical and biochemical processes, and so forth. And that means that the “soul as body” is the psychical body: the body of emotions, imagination, and thought. And what are its organs?

T. As a psychologist, you should know this.

s. They are psychical mechanisms—the “algorithms” of psychical processes, for example, the mechanisms of categorization, classification, logical conclusion, and so forth, or the mechanisms of fear, anger, shame, and so forth, or the mechanisms of imagination...

But how can one prove the reality of subtle bodies? By the fact that one can observe them in the form of an aura?

T. This is proof only for those who can see auras.

s. What about those who don't see them, but who have read a great deal and have many questions about them?

T. For that person, this “proof” proves nothing.

s. Because it is not based on experience...But what proof of the reality of subtle bodies (and of subtle human things) is possible for me?

T. There is nothing to prove. You already understand that the psychical world exists. Human psychical thing is his part of this world—his experience.

s. You mean that my experience, just by the fact of its existence, confirms the reality of my psychical thing.

T. And if you look at it more, then you notice that it not only confirms yours, but others' as well.

s. But still I would like to touch subtle things “with my hands.”

T. That has already been talked about. As it is, you have been touching them “with your hands” the whole time.

s. But only my own...

T. It is possible to “touch” not “only your own.”

s. You mean that the hands by which I can “touch” others did not grow from me...And what about proof of the reality of bodies?

T. That is even more obvious. All your psychical life is such proof. You are constantly “digesting” what your physical body obtains. And constantly “producing” what your physical body then embodies in the world of substance. And you constantly radiate something into subtle worlds, and you receive something from them.

s. “Radiate and receive”? You mean those “sparks or splashes,” which the “human-drop” in the “movie” exchanges with his world. As I understand, such exchanges manifest in the phenomena of emotional contamination: crowd, empathy, the influence of an adult's mood on a child's mood, or an orator's mood on the audience's mood. And also in the phenomena of a “thought borne in the air” or simultaneous discoveries.

I see...Actually, the theory of subtle bodies and subtle human things contradicts neither ordinary nor scientific experience. But why is it necessary? How is it “better” than the ordinary opinions about human beings?

T. First, it is not a “theory.” Second, this knowledge permits finding meaning in seemingly meaningless human existence. And to understand the human path—development; to understand what death is, and what life is.

s. But how can I understand all this?

T. For this it is necessary not only to “theoretically” know, but also to see how a human being realizes ideas by his own life. And to see that “human things” are the embodiment of these ideas.

s. Do you mean “human” ideas? I think I see how they are embodied. For example, everything in the psyche—knowledge, representations, strivings, goals, character traits, habits, skills, etc.—are ideas embodied in psychical forms. Laziness, for example, embodies the idea of economy; fear—self-preservation; aggressiveness—destruction. And they continue to be embodied even more visibly in human actions. And the “biochemical factory” of the physical body also embodies its ideas: the

designs of “industrial inventors,” “engineers,” “factory builders,” “workers,” even the proto-ideas of refinable raw material.

Actually, when I see the realization of ideas in a person’s life, I begin to better understand it. A surprising picture is revealed—a gigantic clock mechanism made of many different sizes of wheels. What turns the wheels are “springs”—the strivings of ideas to be realized. Outwardly such “springiness” can manifest itself, as a necessity, the urgency of life’s task. And each turn of the wheel of idea turns the wheel of its proto-idea.

For example, many wheels in the psyche turn from understanding a task through its resolution to giving meaning to this resolution. Let us say that I do not have enough freedom. It seems to me that “freedom is the most important thing.” And I achieve freedom. But I find out that I did not become happier. This discovery initiates interior work. And it turns out that “freedom is not the most important thing.” Now I do not know what freedom is, how important it is—I know nothing. And only some time later I come to a new, more profound understanding of it. Now my freedom is sufficient for me. Although outwardly nothing has changed.

Or, right now. I receive an idea from you for realization. Then I will attempt to write it down: I will continue to search for the right words and time after time not find them. These will be the cycles of my realization of your idea. And only as a result will I begin to better understand what you meant and what I must say. And I will thus enrich the mother idea of my writings.

But development? That is what confuses me... Somehow I do not have the heart to call all this rotation of human mechanism “development”... Something is not right in this clock: the wheels turn independently, and one revolution of the minute hand does not advance the hour hand to the next number. “Physical” ideas do not—thank God!—embody “psychical” ones. And “psychical” ones do not embody “spiritual” ones. But the main thing is that it is not clear what center all this revolves around. It is not clear what wheel is most important...

Ordinarily, when development is mentioned, people forget that only what was “involved”—what was in the embryo, in the “seed,” in the “bud”—can evolve or develop. And the word “development” is used not even to describe changes—when there are changes, something new is built in place of the old—but some kind of “fattening,” or “adding on layers.” No matter what we are talking about—about “self-perfection,” about “self-realization,” about “self-knowledge,” or about any other kind of “self-something”—“development” always remains no more than the formation of new actions: new skills, or new behavior, or new modes of emotional reaction, or new knowledge, that is, a new way of giving meaning to new experience...

You said that development is the realization of an individual idea... But the tasks that a person accomplishes seem “not his,” “foreign,” as if someone else is assigning them. And among the ideas they realize, it is not apparent what could be called his individual idea. Where in all this chaos is development?

T. There is also development in “chaos.” But only “also.” In order to see it, you must see the spiritual thing behind the psychical thing and the spiritual body behind the psychical body.

The individual idea is not one of many other “human” ideas. The “human embryo” is being created from material of other “human” ideas. From that material the spiritual body assembles the individual idea, and thereby grows a spiritual thing.

s. And what is a spiritual thing? The substratum of the individual idea?

T. Yes.

s. And how does the spiritual body assemble the individual idea?

T. The spiritual body turns initially “not a person’s own” ideas into “the person’s own,” and thereby forms with them the individual idea. This assimilation of “not the person’s own” is the spiritual body’s main work.

s. That is, the individual idea is assimilated ideas of experience? And do you mean that everything occurring in coarse bodies is material for the individual idea?

T. Exactly.

**Conversation Seventeen
Concerning What Role in Development the
Spiritual Body Plays**

s. Well, this matter, as the saying goes, has come to a head.

What is the spiritual body?

T. A magic crystal. It gathers spiritual light and illuminates a human being with it. And conversely, it gathers light from a person and directs it to subtle worlds.

s. But most people do not even have this body. In those who do, it does almost nothing.

I understand what a human being does in coarse worlds. He transforms things of the world of substance into one another. He also transforms things of the world of substance into psychical ones: for example, food—into a feeling of satiety, or a machine—into a thought about a machine. And conversely, psychical things into “substantial” ones: a feeling of hunger—into walking to a restaurant. And of course, he transforms psychical things into one another.

But transforming things of the world of meanings and reasons into things of the world of human energies, and vice versa...Is this so rare?!

T. It happens much more often than you think.

This is a human being’s main purpose—to illuminate and to sanctify: to flood everything that he touches, and above all himself, with light.

s. It seemed to me that human beings are up to their ears in dirt, and flood whatever they touch with something other than light. Am I not right?

T. You simply see one and not the other.

s. I’m not sure...How does the spiritual body’s work manifest itself?

T. It inspires one. It illumines another. It sends someone else in search of something new. And another it Transforms...

s. But all this happens to one in a thousand and, in the best case, once in a lifetime. What do others' spiritual bodies do? Or, in the lifetime remaining for those fortunate ones that you are speaking of...Do their spiritual bodies rest?

T. No. The spiritual body works always and in everyone. It is the spiritual body that connects a person with his senior partners in the Circle of Spirit.

s. But only the elite connects with angels...

T. No, not only. On the rising "conveyor," angels do indeed continue to refine only the most subtle human thoughts and feelings. But the descending spirit endows all people equally with its light.

s. So there is no symmetry here?

But how does spiritual light manifest itself in most people? In those who are not familiar with higher experiences, such as inspiration, coming to a standstill before beauty, or religious ecstasy? As evil and hatred?

T. Your ironies and arrogance are pointless. Everyone has intuition. And many do the "impossible" at least once. Or after an internal battle, and sometimes for "no reason at all," they make seemingly meaningless, unexplainable decisions that change their lives, and then these decisions turn out to have been singularly correct.

s. Perhaps I am beginning to understand...

And development is the most evident precisely at these moments...These "revolutions of development" renew a person. Unnoticed by others, a "critical mass" of desire for change accumulates, and then...a fermentation of the spirit that seems to have no basis breaks through, resulting in someone's renouncing a career, someone else's leaving a good family. Another emigrates, another falls in love...

But psychologists explain such things by subconscious reasons...

T. These reasons are not "sub-", but "super-conscious."

s. But the influences of astral parasites manifest themselves in similar ways: irrationality, “baseless” emotions and impulses, such as childish phobias or tendencies to suicide or aggression. How does one differentiate one from the other?

T. Light from dark? Light brings life, movement, changes. Even sadness evoked by it is light. And anxiety, if it exists, is light and flickering, rather than unremitting as in all-encompassing fear.

s. But does light cast shadows like sadness and anxiety?

T. Of course. When it meets dense psychical things in its way.

s. Thus, some are open to light and are illuminated, and others have “blindness” on and complain about the darkness. Right? The first have quiet within; they attentively listen for a spiritual voice, and therefore they hear it, while the second hear almost nothing because of internal uproar. Is this the main distinction among people?

T. Not only that. The light of spirit interacts with a dense psyche in various ways: it is embodied in various ways and changes people in various ways.

s. I understand. Actually, very interesting “photochemical” processes take place when the spirit enters dense psychical layers. Sometimes the spirit is embodied unconstrainedly in such pure states as delight or enchantment. But more often, the spirit is being interwoven in the psyche with “golden threads.” The flow of spiritual light is “condensed” in very rapid, almost imperceptible psychical processes: snatches of vague meanings and indistinct ideas, or strange images, premonitions, or conjectures. All this occurs at the periphery of awareness, and the phenomena quickly disappear, leaving a vague feeling. These “streams of golden rain” are future “threads” which have not yet “congealed.” Later they “congeal”: rapid processes slow down and become more weighty.

But the gold of the spirit, in contrast to the ordinary, is active. Its combination with the “unpurified” psyche kindles a fire of contradictions between the new and the old. Between Higher will and a person’s will; between Higher knowledge of how to act and a person’s understanding of

how to act; between intuition and erudition; between conscience and egoism. And this internal fire both develops and purifies a person. Right?

T. More precisely, it creates the conditions, i.e., prepares for development.

s. But if the spiritual body acts in everyone, why does no one know about it? And why is it only rarely possible to see it? Because it is sometimes working and sometimes not working? Or is spiritual radiation so weak that it is possible to be convinced of its reality only by accumulated result? Like a weak light leaves a trace on film only after long exposure.

T. The spiritual body is always visible, and it is visible to the naked eye, but it is mistakenly considered to be the psychical body.

s. Do you mean phenomena of higher experiences? But they are rare.

T. No, other phenomena. You call them the "Self" and "consciousness"

s. They are spiritual? Not psychical?!

T. Spiritual. If you look at a crystal of the spiritual body "from the outside," it is seen to be an intermediary between a human being and subtle worlds. But a human being usually sees it from the inside—like the dome under which he lives, or like the lamp that lights his life.

s. You mean this is the reason that in the phenomena of Self and consciousness, the spiritual seems to be psychical...But consciousness is the psychical illumination of the psyche...

T. It is illumination, but not psychical. The psyche shines only by reflected light. The source of the light is higher. Besides, consciousness is not only light, but also the one who looks.

s. Understood. Actually even with illumination, it is possible to not look. And if one looks mechanically, not separating himself from what he is looking at, he does not see. He begins to see only when the smooth flow of life is disrupted. So the Self is "the one who looks." Right?

T. No. Usually those who look are representatives of the Self—those inhabitants of a person to which the Self granted for a time fulfillment of its duty—the right to be "psychical selves."

s. “Psychical selves”? This is what Assagioli called “sub-personalities,” and Gurdjieff—“multiple selves.” For example, such internal personages as the thinker-self, the idler-self, or the glutton-self?

I understand that any idea realized by a person is a being, and that a person is a colony of beings. But who among these beings represents the Self? And on the basis of what “mandate”? And what does it mean—the “Self granted fulfillment of its duty”?

T. The Self accepts responsibility for one being at one time, for another at another time. And in this way transmits to them his powers—makes them “psychical selves.”

s. That means the Self is not itself present, but “in the person of his ambassadors.” Right?

T. Yes, the Self itself rarely appears in the psyche. But, as the organ of the spiritual body, the Self is continuously acting.

s. Well, why...I think I understood that the spiritual body is not something mystically unique, but a rather ordinary “part” of a human being. But how does it work? How does this “crystal-lens” and “eye-light” that both looks at and illuminates a human being—how does this thing develop a human being? What ideas does it assimilate, and how does it assimilate them? How does it create from them the individual idea? And how does it realize this individual idea? And how does it grow a spiritual thing? What a tangle of questions this is! And how does one begin to untangle it?

T. From the most important point—from *assimilation*.

s. You spoke in the last conversation about assimilation. But truth to tell, I did not really understand what it is...

T. A human being assimilates what goes on inside himself to various degrees: from *unknowable* through *only knowable* (what is *happening*) to *doable*.

Unknowable is what happens “by itself”—a person does not realize that this is happening in him. And, of course, a person does not speak about the unknowable.

s. That is, things such as blood circulation or food digestion—in general, almost all the work of the physical body's "biochemical factory"—are unknowable. And what does *only knowable* mean?

T. Something a person knows about, that is HAPPENING to him, although he is not DOING it.

s. For example, pain or shortness of breath. People describe them by saying, "It happens that..." as in, for example, "It happens that I have a headache,"—that is, "my head is mine," but, at the same time, it exists separately from me. Nobody says "I suffer by my head."

T. Then it is clear what *doable* is. It is when the Self begins to work. "I hammer a nail" is the way people speak about something *doable*. So the *doable* is something for which the Self takes responsibility. That means, when the Self accepts responsibility for something, it thereby assimilates ideas that are realized by this "something." Is that right?

T. Not quite. Assimilation begins back when the *unknowable* becomes *only knowable*. Acceptance of responsibility is the next and very important step. The step that changes very much in the assimilated idea. That changes very much in the spiritual thing. And thus in the individual idea.

s. But what changes in the idea, which is realized as it is, as a result of the Self accepting responsibility for its realization?

T. Above all, the strength of its "spring" is increased. When a weak being "clutches" a big idea, he cannot realize it without the help of a stronger being. And the spiritual body is the strongest part of a human being.

s. That is, the more assimilated an action is, the more effective it is... So, for example, if I believe that I must write a book that is important for other people, but requires inspiration rather than rationality, I should let this intention permeate me and enlist for its realization the strongest, i.e., spiritual powers. Right?

T. Yes. Without that you will accomplish nothing.

s. And what else changes?

T. Acceptance of responsibility places the idea in a “furnace,” in which the person “alloys” various ideas.

s. Do you mean that a person may “alloy” only ideas that he identifies with?

T. Of course. By themselves they are too diverse—all those borrowed opinions, strivings, tastes, ideals, principles, rules...

s. Understood. Actually, for example, if a child hears that it is bad to be greedy and even believes it, and, at the same time, begrudges his buddy, say, a race car, both ideas—greed and generosity—live together in him, not hindering each other. But when the child says to himself: “I am good, I am not greedy,” and then “I did not give him the race car; that means I am greedy,” he lets both ideas permeate himself, and they begin to interact.

And I understand now that the Self unites a person by accepting responsibility. The Self undertakes to do the work (realization of the idea) of the separate “inhabitants” of the person and thereby “takes” the work away from them: he makes their work his own and thus “conquers” them, subjecting them to itself.

And how does acceptance of responsibility change the spiritual thing?

T. Starting the realization of an idea, the Self takes upon himself the obligation to finish it. And thereby introduces into the spiritual thing the task that must be resolved.

s. And afterwards, neither stopping nor returning is possible? And it is not important how much time this task requires?

T. It is this that makes development unavoidable.

s. So the Self entangles itself with “promissory notes,” which become ideas of its future. And become not for one life.

For example, a military career not accomplished becomes a lust for power in the new life. And the unfinished work of a forest ranger becomes a love for nature. Then the successes of regression therapy that I mentioned are understandable. Thus, many unconscious complexes are actually unresolved problems from past lives, right? Their ideas have left

an imprint in the spiritual body and have returned in the new embodiment as an unconscious complex.

T. Only not in the spiritual body, but in the spiritual thing. And not simply "left an imprint," but charged it.

s. Charged? Because unfinished tasks in the spiritual thing are forces compelling their completion and, in that sense, attracting the future destiny... This is what you meant when you said that the spiritual body grows a spiritual thing. Right?

T. Acceptance of responsibility is only "sowing." But its seeds will grow without fail.

s. Now I am beginning to understand what acceptance of responsibility introduces into the individual idea and why it develops a human being.

Making "alien" ideas "one's own," acceptance of responsibility fills the individual idea with content. For example, a person's individual idea may not include construction work. He was not predestined to build. But when he tells himself, "I will build a house," his individual idea fills with the idea of construction. Now he is already obligated to build a house. And when he actually builds it, this construction experience realizes his individual idea.

But this is what I am thinking about. Much of what is *doable* is indeed *only knowable*, or *happening*. All that is "done" automatically, mechanically. But a human being not only sneezes or hiccups like an automaton. He can read like an automaton: accumulate information—and that is all. To "think" like an automaton: to spin memorized formulas in his head. To act like an automaton, blindly fulfilling orders or copying someone's behavior. And at the same time he will say, "I read," and not "It happens that I am reading." But this is not assimilation, is it?

T. No. "Simple" doing is only the first stage of assimilation. The second is *spiritual awareness*, i.e., *co-knowing* or *spiritually aware doing*.

Conversation Eighteen
Concerning the Role of Spiritual Awareness
for Development

s. In the last conversation, when you spoke about “spiritual awareness” and “co-knowing,” what did you mean?

T. Spiritual vision: the spiritually aware Self looks at what is happening in the psyche—thoughts, feelings, sensations—and co-knows them, i.e., “doubles” them with “co-knowledge.”

s. “Spiritual vision”? Is that intuition?

T. No, they are not the same. Spiritual vision is the source of some kinds of intuition, but not of other kinds.

s. Then is it self-observation or reflection? When a person simultaneously does something (or something happens inside him) and is aware of what he is doing (or what is happening)—he becomes an observer of himself. Is that right?

T. No. Co-knowing and self-observing are different things.

A self-observing observer is a psychical being: he differs little from what he observes. Besides self-observation he is usually occupied with other things, such as self-analysis, self-praise, or, on the contrary, self-criticism, etc. He avidly evaluates what is going on, he worries, rejoices, gets angry, passes judgment, even tries to interfere.

The co-knowing observer, the Self, belongs not to the psychical world and observes not from the psychical world. And he observes dispassionately. But effectively.

s. Not intuition and not reflection! Is it then extraction of meaning? What you say about spiritual vision also occurs in ordinary cognition.

T. No. What co-knows is the spiritual body, while what extracts meaning is ordinarily the psychical body...A “spiritual image” of spiritual

awareness is much more complete than “thought images.” Just extracting the most subtle meanings actually requires spiritual awareness.

s. Thus it is also not extraction of meaning? That is, it is something quite distinctive, like nothing else...It seems to me I know what this is...I already mentioned the Center of God, the source of the most powerful forces. Upon introspection it seems like a little point of starlight—a “starlet”—that barely gleams in the farthest background of consciousness—beyond all its other content. So, is it the Self, the “spiritual eye”?

T. Only this “starlet” can shine brighter than hundreds of Suns.

s. And I understood what “to co-know” means. Actually, these states are utterly unusual. In order to begin to co-know, it is necessary—I cannot find the precise words—to release the Self, to hand over administration to the Self, to rise to the Self. In short, it is necessary to find the subject of one's own activity. Gurdjieff called this “self-remembering.”

In order to do this I devised the following method—to move from ordinary self-observing to “observing the self-observer.” Then, to “observing the self-observer's observer.” And so forth. And very rapidly the starlet of the Self appears “in the sky.”

But what initiates the transition to co-knowing is one of the psychical selves. However, only a few of them are capable of this. For example, the gambler-self in a casino or the epicure-self in a restaurant are concentrating on something else. But the observer-self is capable of co-knowing. Only it needs tranquil surroundings. However, not a semi-sleep state. It seems that spiritual awareness requires the surface of the psyche to be calm, that is, to have no “ripples” on it. And nothing, neither fatigue nor any kind of intoxication, can obscure it. Only then may it become a mirror for the Self.

Have I correctly understood you? Is this the spiritual awareness you are talking about?

T. Those are gleams of it. But not the only ones you know.

s. What are the others?

T. Any sublime states.

s. For example, when I am guessing about something and it dawns on me—“Aha!”?

T. For example.

s. And does spiritual awareness change what a person has become aware of?

T. It does not simply change.

s. Then how?

T. It is difficult for you to understand now. Spiritual awareness is a bright light. Much brighter than the twilight of ordinary consciousness. And this light transforms everything that it illuminates: it penetrates within and fills it completely, making the non-transparent transparent and the dull to shine.

s. But I would not say that spiritual awareness fills me with bright light. And why do I not feel at all that I am becoming transparent or radiant?

T. You have not worked enough yet. And you will not be the first to feel your “transparency and radiance.”

s. Do you mean those around me? Sometimes, although rarely, I have met people who radiate light. From their eyes, and perhaps from their whole being. And people are immediately drawn to them. Does that mean that when the light of co-knowing floods a person, it also pours through a person onto the world? Did you mean this when you said that a person floods with light everything he comes in contact with?

T. Not “floods”—must “flood.” But in order to do this, he must be transformed completely by spiritual awareness.

s. Is this transformation “the embodiment of the reign of God”? In a human being, and also through a human being on the Earth?

T. If so, these are only words for you now.

s. But why is spiritual awareness the second stage of assimilation?

T. Because spiritual awareness completes what was begun by accepting responsibility—the realization of a “piece” of the individual idea. Co-knowledge is the quintessence—the idea, a “subtle copy,” and, in essence,

a plan—of what was done with spiritual awareness. And this plan, like any other, serves to subject the alien to oneself and to make it one's own.

s. That is, to make the uncontrollable controllable and thus, subject to will. So, what is extracted by co-knowing—the “ideas-copies-plans”—are the tools of future existence—the prototypes of future actions?

T. Exactly—tools.

s. And these tools are abilities!

Then it is clear that the most important aspect of development is actually not the formation of new actions. The main thing is that development extracts the ideas of assimilated actions.

When a person suddenly understands how something may be done, or, more often, how he did something, it is by this understanding that he “extracts” the idea of what was done (or what he did) and places it into a “warehouse of building blocks,” where it is stored until required along with other similarly acquired “blocks” for building a new more complex action.

I understand...

But what besides abilities does spiritual awareness add to the spiritual thing? You said that the spiritual thing gathers ideas of experience. Abilities are ideas of what was done. But “what a person has done” is only one part of experience. The other parts of experience are “what a person has felt,” “what a person has thought,” “what a person has believed,” “what a person has wished;” and finally, the events of his life—“what the person has lived through.” And thus, the spiritual thing must also contain the ideas of all these parts of experience...

T. The spiritual thing gathers ideas not just of any experience, but ideas of assimilated experience. The more assimilated an experience is, the more its ideas remain in spiritual things. Everything depends on the **nature** of a person's thinking, feeling, wishing, etc. If they were something that has simply *happened*, then their assimilation is only beginning. And in this case, almost nothing remains of them in the spiritual thing. But when one

accepts responsibility for what he experiences, the experience is immediately transformed from what has *happened* into what is *doable*...

s. That is, the person turns “It happens that I have a headache” into “I suffer by my head,” and a simple “How terrible!” into “No one else but I feel fear.”

Thus everything depends upon the kind of experience. If something simply pops into a person’s mind, or a feeling overwhelms him, or misfortune strikes him, these events would not leave their traces in the spiritual thing. What do remain are only those thoughts, feelings and events the person experienced actively, i.e., the ones he has accepted responsibility for, the ones he considered himself the subject of. And of course, what the person was spiritually aware of remains. But such active thinking, feeling, etc. do not differ from doing, and ideas of these active thoughts, feelings, etc. do not differ from other ideas of what is done—that is, from abilities. Is that right?

T. Yes.

s. But then, what about subtle, lofty feelings? It seems that hours of spiritually aware grievance leave their traces in the spiritual thing, and nothing remains of minutes of selfless inspiration...

T. Yes, often coarse experiences are co-known, and they remain. But, of course, in no way are they hours. Seconds suffice for spiritual awareness to leave nothing from a grievance. And regarding actual subtle experiences, as a rule, they are experienced with spiritual awareness.

s. But coarse experiences are alien to subtle spiritual matter, are they not?

T. The most subtle experiences by themselves are also “alien.” But it is their ideas, not they themselves, that remain in the spiritual thing.

s. That is, experience does not “stick to,” but “paints” the crystal of the spiritual thing, right?

T. If you wish.

s. Now I understand what Gurdjieff’s concept of “essence” was and why he said that only essence develops. Essence is what was practically and

“experientially” known and deeply felt; that is, the spiritual thing enriched—“charged” and “painted”—with everything that was partially or fully assimilated.

Then I understand what the juices are which the roots fed to the flower in the “movie”! Well...

You told so much of everything that I need to summarize all this.

Thus, development is assimilation. The first phase of assimilation is acceptance of responsibility; the second—co-knowing. Speaking figuratively, the spiritual body “eats” a person by means of assimilation. Accepting responsibility is the tentacle of the spiritual body that grabs a “piece of person,” while in co-knowing, the spiritual body sucks the “life juices” from it.

And thus, until the whole person is “eaten”?

T. If such cannibalistic analogies make it more understandable for you. But the spiritual body “eats” with the “eye.” And it is more accurate to speak, not about “eating,” but about “seeing”—“until the whole person is seen.”

s. Thus, spiritual vision works like ordinary vision: the longer you look, the more you see...And the more you look at one detail, the more details you see in it...

And the spiritual eye “drills” a person more deeply, observing and thereby completing in him more and more of what was begun earlier?

T. Yes. From quite recent “parts” to quite ancient “parts.”

s. Therefore, a spiritual view moves from co-knowing large-scale behavior patterns, formed recently, that is, skills and habits, to co-knowing older patterns—character traits that were still formed in this present embodiment. And then, to co-knowing what appeared before the present birth. In this it crosses the zone of what psychologists call the subconscious, in particular, complexes of various kinds, formed from childhood, prenatal, or even more remote experiences. And it goes even deeper, to co-knowing the elemental psychical processes. And further, down the phylogenetic stairway, to co-knowing physical body function,

including the physiological (to the cellular level) and physicochemical processes. Is this what Aurobindo spoke about?

T. Yes.

s. So the final goal of development will be attained only when the whole person is completely co-known and flooded with light...

But this is a very long slow process! Especially since most people do not know about spiritual awareness...

T. They do not know. But they have gleams of spiritual awareness. And the results of these gleams accumulate.

And besides, over time, the slow process accelerates.

Conversation Nineteen Concerning an Important Episode of Development, Which is Called “Death”

s. Teacher, as I understand it, death is the disintegration of the stable system of human bodies. That is, death turns one being—a living person—into two: a corpse and a disembodied soul. Is that right?

T. No.

First, the main thing is not that death is disintegration, but that it is a very important part of the route a person follows in his development.

Second, what “disintegrates” is not the “stable system of bodies,” but the entire triad of a “living person”: bodies, ideas, and things.

Third, death divides the triad “person” into more than two triads.

And fourth, “disintegration” at death releases, or, if you like, cleanses the top layer of the triad “living person” not only from the physical, but also from the soul layer. Thus, “disembodied soul” is a misnomer for what is separated from the corpse. The “shedding” of the physical body and the physical thing is only the beginning of purification. Later the “air human” is released in the same way from the soul.