The Ascent to Truth

A Drama of Life
in a Prologue, Seven Stages
and an Epilogue

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

THE PHILANTHROPIST
THE PESSIMIST
THE SCIENTIST
THE ARTIST
THREE STUDENTS
TWO LOVERS
THE ASCETIC
TWO ASPIRANTS

Prologue: In the Artist’s studio, preliminary meeting.

Seven stages of the ascent, of which the seventh is at the summit.

Epilogue: The new world.
Prologue

In the Artist’s studio

Evening, at night-fall; the end of a meeting held by a small group of people united in a common aspiration to find the Truth.

Present:

The man of goodwill, the philanthropist.
The disillusioned man who no longer believes in the possibility of happiness on earth.
The scientist who seeks to solve the problems of Nature.
The artist who dreams of a more beautiful ideal.
A group of three students (two boys and a girl) who have faith in a better life and in themselves.
Two lovers who are seeking for perfection in human love.
The ascetic who is prepared for any austerity in order to discover the Truth.
Two beings brought together by a common aspiration, and who have chosen the Infinite because they have been chosen by the Infinite.

The curtain rises.

ARTIST
My dear friends, our meeting is drawing to an end and before we close and take the final resolution which will unite us in action, I must ask you once again if you have anything to add to the declarations you have already made.
On Education

PHILANTHROPIST
Yes, I would like to state once again that I have devoted my whole life to helping humanity; for many years I have tried all known and possible methods, but none has given me satisfactory results and I am now convinced that I must find the Truth if I want to succeed in my endeavour. Yes, unless one has found the true meaning of life, how can one help men effectively? All the remedies we use are mere palliatives, not cures. Only the consciousness of Truth can save humanity.

PESSIMIST
I have suffered too much in life. I have experienced too many disillusionments, borne too much injustice, seen too much misery. I no longer believe in anything, I no longer expect anything from the world or from men. My last remaining hope is to find the Truth — always supposing that it is possible to find it.

FIRST ASPIRANT
You see us together here because a common aspiration has linked our lives; but we are not bound by any carnal or even emotional ties. One single preoccupation dominates our existence: to find the Truth.

ONE OF THE LOVERS (indicating the Aspirants)
Unlike our two friends here, we two (he puts his arm around his beloved) live only by each other and for each other. Our sole ambition is to realise a perfect union, to become a single being in two bodies, one thought, one will, one breath in two breasts, one beat in two hearts that live only by their love, in their love, for their love. It is the perfect truth of love that we want to discover and live: to that we have dedicated our lives.

ASCETIC
It does not seem to me that the Truth can be reached so easily. The path that leads to it must be difficult, steep, precipitous, full of dangers and risks, of threats and deceptive illusions. An
unshakable will and nerves of steel are needed to overcome all these obstacles. I am ready for every sacrifice, every austerity, every renunciation in order to make myself worthy of the sublime goal I have set before me.

ARTIST (turning to the others)
You have nothing more to add? No. So we are all agreed: together, by uniting our efforts, we shall climb this sacred mountain that leads to the Truth. It is a difficult and arduous enterprise, but well worth the attempt, for when one reaches the summit, one can look upon the Truth and all problems must necessarily be solved.

So tomorrow we shall all meet at the foot of the mountain and together we shall begin the ascent. Good-bye.

All withdraw after saying good-bye.
Seven Stages of the Ascent

FIRST STAGE

A kind of green plateau from which one has a view of the whole valley. From this plateau, the path which has been easy and wide so far suddenly narrows and winds round the spurs of the massive and rocky mountain rising to the left.

All arrive together, full of energy and enthusiasm. They look down on the valley below. Then the Philanthropist calls them together with a gesture.

PHILANTHROPIST

Friends, I must speak to you. I have something serious to tell you. (Silence. All listen attentively.)

Cheerfully, easily, we have climbed the mountain all together as far as this plateau from which we can look at life and better understand its problems and the cause of human suffering. Our knowledge is becoming vaster and deeper and we are nearer to finding the solution I am seeking... (Silence)

But here we come to a decisive turning-point. Now the ascent will become steeper and harder and above all, we are going to cross over to the other side of the mountain where we shall no longer be able to see the valley and men. This means that I shall have to give up my work and betray my pledge to help humanity. Do not ask me to stay with you; I must leave you and return to my duty. (He starts back on the downward path. The others look at one another in surprise and disappointment.)

ASCETIC

Poor friend! He has gone back, vanquished by his attachment to his work, by the illusion of the outer world and its appearances.
But nothing should slow us down; let us continue on our way, without regret, without hesitation.

They set out once more.

SECOND STAGE

A part of the path where the slope becomes steeper and turns at right angles, so that it is impossible to see where it goes. Below, a long, white, very dense cloud completely isolates it from the world.

They all pass by more or less cheerfully except the Pessimist who comes last, dragging his feet, and sinks down on the bank by the roadside. He holds his head in his hands and sits there without moving. The others notice that he is not following them and look back. One of the Students retracts his steps and touches him on the shoulder.

FIRST STUDENT
Well, well, what’s the matter with you? Are you tired?

PESSIMIST (waving him away)
No, leave me, leave me alone. I have had enough! It’s impossible!

FIRST STUDENT
But why? Come on, take heart!

PESSIMIST
No, no, I tell you I am worn out. It’s a stupid and impossible venture. (Pointing to the cloud beneath their feet.) Just look at that! We are completely cut off from the world and life. Nothing, nothing is left on which we can base our understanding.

(He looks back towards the point where the path turns at right angles.) And there! We can’t even see where we are going!
On Education

It is an absurdity or a delusion — perhaps both! After all, there might not even be any Truth to discover. The world and life are only a dead end — a hell in which we are imprisoned. You can go on if you like, but I won’t move, I refuse to be taken in!

_He buries his head in his hands once more. The Student, losing all hope of convincing him and not wanting to linger, leaves him to his despair and joins the others. They continue their climb._

**THIRD STAGE**

_The Scientist and the Artist arrive together after the others, as if they had dropped behind while talking. They are nearing the end of their conversation._

**SCIENTIST**

Yes, as I was telling you, I believe we set out on this adventure a little rashly.

**ARTIST**

It is true that so far our ascent seems to have been rather fruitless. Of course, we have made some very interesting observations, but these observations have not had much result.

**SCIENTIST**

Yes, I prefer my own methods — they are much more rational. They are based on constant experimentation and I do not take a step forward until I am sure of the validity of the previous one. Let us call our friends — I think I have something to communicate to them. (_He beckons and calls to the others. They draw near and the Scientist addresses them._)

My dear friends and fellow-travellers, as we move further and further away from the world and its concrete reality, I have
The Ascent to Truth

the growing feeling that we are behaving like children. It was revealed to us that if we climbed this precipitous mountain whose summit no one has yet been able to scale, we would reach the Truth—and we set out without even bothering to study the way up. How do we know that we have not taken the wrong path? Where is our assurance that the result will conform to our hopes? It seems to me that we have acted with unpardonable imprudence and that our endeavour is not at all scientific. I have therefore decided, although to my great regret, since my friendly feelings towards you all remain intact, that I must stop here in order to study the problem and if possible to form some certainty about the path to follow, the right path, the one which leads to the goal.

(After a pause) Besides, I am convinced that if I can find the secret of the composition of the smallest thing in Nature, for example this humble stone on the path, I shall have found the Truth we are seeking. So I shall stay here and bid you au revoir—yes, au revoir, I hope; for perhaps you will come back to me and to scientific methods. Or else, if I find what I am looking for, I shall come to you to bring you the good news.

ARTIST
I too am thinking of leaving you. My reasons are not the same as those of our friend the scientist, but they are just as compelling.

During this interesting climb of ours, I have had some experiences: new beauties have been revealed to me; or rather, a new sense of beauty has taken birth in me. At the same time, I have been seized with an ardent and imperious need to express my experience in concrete forms, to cast them in Matter, so that they may serve for the education of all and especially so that the physical world may be illumined by them.

I am going to leave you, then, regretfully, and stay here until I can give form to my new impressions. When I have said all that
On Education

I have to say, I shall take up the ascent again and rejoin you, wherever you are, in quest of new discoveries.
Good-bye, and good luck!

All the others look at one another in some dismay. The second Student (the girl) cries out:

SECOND STUDENT
What do we care about these defections! Each one follows his destiny and acts according to his own nature. Nothing can turn us away from our endeavour. Let us continue on our way, courageously, boldly, without weakening.

They all go on except the Scientist and the Artist.

FOURTH STAGE
The two Aspirants and the Ascetic pass by together without stopping and continue their ascent at a firm and steady pace.

Behind them, the two lovers, absorbed in each other, walk hand in hand, taking no notice of the others.

Just behind them the three students arrive, visibly tired. They stop.

FIRST STUDENT
Well, my friends! This is what I call a climb! What a path! It goes up and up without a break — there’s no time to catch your breath. I am beginning to feel tired.

SECOND STUDENT
What! You too want to give up? That’s not very sporting of you!
FIRST STUDENT
No, no, there’s no question of giving up. But why don’t we rest a while and sit down for a moment to get our breath back? My legs are hurting me. We shall climb much better after relaxing a little. Have a heart, let’s sit down for a moment, only for a moment. Afterwards we shall set out with more enthusiasm. You’ll see!

THIRD STUDENT
All right! We don’t want to leave you here moping all alone. Besides, I feel rather tired too. Let’s sit down together and tell each other what we have seen and learnt.

SECOND STUDENT (after a moment’s hesitation, she too sits down)
Well, it’s only because I don’t want to part company with you. But we must not stay here long. It is dangerous to linger on the way.

The Lovers look back and seeing them sitting there, continue on their way.

FIFTH STAGE
Much higher up. The path is narrower and overlooks a wide horizon. The valley is still hidden from sight by dense white clouds. To the left, just off the path, stands a small house facing the sky. The first three pass on without stopping. Then the Lovers arrive arm in arm, absorbed in their mutual dream.

GIRL (noticing that they are alone)
Look, no one is left... We are alone.

507
On Education

What do the others matter! We don’t need them — aren’t we perfectly happy together?

BOY (seeing the house on the roadside)
Look, darling, look at that little house on the hillside, isolated and yet so welcoming, so intimate and yet opening onto infinite space. What more do we need? An ideal place to shelter our union. For we have realised, we two, a perfect, total union, without shadow or cloud. Let us leave the others to their climb towards a problematic Truth — we have found our own, our own truth. That is enough for us.

GIRL
Yes, my love. Let us settle in this house and enjoy our love without a care for anything else.

Still arm in arm, they leave the path and go towards the house.

SIXTH STAGE

The end of the path has become extremely narrow and stops abruptly at the foot of a huge rock whose sheer wall rises towards the sky so that the summit is out of sight. To the left, there is a kind of small plateau at the far end of which a small low hut is visible. The whole scene looks bare and deserted.

The last three climbers arrive together. But the Ascetic stops and halts the others with a gesture.

ASCETIC
I have something important to communicate to you. Will you kindly listen to me, both of you? In the course of our ascent I have discovered my true being, my true Self. I have become one
The Ascent to Truth

with the Eternal and nothing else exists for me, nothing else is necessary. All that is not That is illusory, worthless. So I consider that I have reached the end of the path. (He gestures towards the plateau on the left.) And here is a sublime and solitary spot, a place that is truly favourable to the life I shall lead from now on. I shall live here in perfect contemplation, far from earth and men, free at last from the need to live.

*Without another word, without a gesture of farewell, without looking back, he goes straight towards the realisation of his personal goal.*

*Left to themselves, the two Aspirants look at each other, moved by the greatness of his gesture. But they recover themselves immediately and the girl cries out:*

**SECOND ASPIRANT**

No! That cannot be the Truth, the whole Truth. The universal creation cannot be merely an illusion from which one has to escape. Besides, we have not yet reached the summit of the mountain, we have not yet completed our ascent.

**FIRST ASPIRANT (indicating the end of the path stopping short at the wall of rock that rises almost vertically)**

But here the pathway stops. It seems that no human being has ever gone any further. To climb this sheer rock that rises before us and seems to be inaccessible, we must discover for ourselves the way to go on step by step, by our own efforts, with no other guide or help than our will and our faith. No doubt we shall have to hew our own path.

**SECOND ASPIRANT (eagerly)**

Never mind! Let us go on, ever onwards. We still have something left to find: the creation has a meaning that we have yet to discover.
On Education

They set out once more.

SEVENTH STAGE

The Summit

The two Aspirants who have valiantly withstood every test, haul themselves up with a supreme effort to the summit, bathed in brilliant light. Everything is light except the little patch of rock on which they stand and which is hardly big enough for their feet.

FIRST ASPIRANT
The summit at last! The shining, dazzling Truth, nothing but the Truth!

SECOND ASPIRANT
Everything else has disappeared. The steps by which we so laboriously climbed to the summit have vanished.

FIRST ASPIRANT
Emptiness behind, in front, everywhere; there is only room for our feet, nothing more.

SECOND ASPIRANT
Where do we go now? What shall we do?

FIRST ASPIRANT
The Truth is here, Truth alone, all around, everywhere.

SECOND ASPIRANT
And yet to realise it we must go further. And for that another secret must be found.
FIRST ASPIRANT  
Obviously, all possibility of personal effort ends here. Another power must intervene.

SECOND ASPIRANT  
Grace, Grace alone can act. Grace alone can open the way for us, Grace alone can perform the miracle.

FIRST ASPIRANT (stretching his arm towards the horizon)  
Look, look over there, far away, on the other side of the bottomless abyss, that peak resplendent with brilliant light, those perfect forms, that marvellous harmony, the promised land, the new earth!

SECOND ASPIRANT  
Yes, that is where we must go. But how?

FIRST ASPIRANT  
Since that is where we must go, the means will be given to us.

SECOND ASPIRANT  
Yes, we must have faith, an absolute trust in the Grace, a total surrender to the Divine.

FIRST ASPIRANT  
Yes, an absolute self-giving to the Divine Will. And since all visible paths have disappeared, we must leap forward without fear or hesitation, in complete trust.

SECOND ASPIRANT  
And we shall be carried to the place where we must go.

*They leap forward.*
Epilogue

The Realisation

A land of fairy light.

FIRST ASPIRANT
Here we are, borne upon invisible wings, by a miraculous power!

SECOND ASPIRANT (looking all around)
What marvellous splendour! Now we have only to learn to live the new life.

Curtain.