I suppose most of you come on Fridays to listen to the reading of *Wu Wei*. If you have listened, you will remember that something’s said there about being “spontaneous”, and that the true way of living the true life is to live spontaneously.

What Lao Tse calls spontaneous is this: instead of being moved by a personal will — mental, vital or physical — one ought to stop all outer effort and let oneself be guided and moved by what the Chinese call Tao, which they identify with the Godhead — or God or the Supreme Principle or the Origin of all things or the creative Truth, indeed all possible human notions of the Divine and the goal to be attained.

To be spontaneous means not to think out, organise, decide and make an effort to realise with the personal will.

I am going to give you two examples to make you understand what true spontaneity is. One — you all know about it undoubtedly — is of the time Sri Aurobindo began writing the *Arya*, in 1914. It was neither a mental knowledge nor even a mental creation which he transcribed: he silenced his mind and sat at the typewriter, and from above, from the higher planes, all that had to be written came down, all ready, and he had only to move his fingers on the typewriter and it was transcribed. It was in this state of mental silence which allows the knowledge — and even the expression — from above to pass through that he wrote the whole *Arya*, with its sixty-four printed pages a month. This is why, besides, he could do it, for if it had been a mental work of construction it would have been quite impossible.

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That is true mental spontaneity.

And if one carries this a little further, one should never think and plan beforehand what one ought to say or write. One should simply be able to silence one’s mind, to turn it like a receptacle towards the higher Consciousness and express as it receives it, in mental silence, what comes from above. That would be true spontaneity.

Naturally, this is not very easy, it asks for preparation.

And if one comes down to the sphere of action, it is still more difficult; for normally, if one wants to act with some kind of logic, one usually has to think out beforehand what one wants to do and plan it before doing it, otherwise one may be tossed about by all sorts of desires and impulses which would be very far from the inspiration spoken about in Wu Wei; it would simply be movements of the lower nature driving you to act. Therefore, unless one has reached the state of wisdom and detachment of the Chinese sage mentioned in this story, it is better not to be spontaneous in one’s daily actions, for one would risk being the plaything of all the most disorderly impulses and influences.

But once one enters the yoga and wants to do yoga, it is very necessary not to be the toy of one’s own mental formations. If one wants to rely on one’s experiences, one must take great care not to construct within oneself the notion of the experiences one wants to have, the idea one has about them, the form one expects or hopes to see. For, the mental formation, as I already have told you very often, is a real formation, a real creation, and with your idea you create forms which are to a certain extent independent of you and return to you as though from outside and give you the impression of being experiences. But these experiences which are either willed or sought after or expected are not spontaneous experiences and risk being illusions — at times even dangerous illusions.

Therefore, when you follow a mental discipline, you must be particularly careful not to imagine or want to have certain
experiences, for in this way you can create for yourself the illusion of these experiences. In the domain of yoga, this very strict and severe spontaneity is absolutely indispensable.

For that, naturally, one must not have any ambition or desire or excessive imagination or what I call “spiritual romanticism”, the taste for the miraculous — all this ought to be very carefully eliminated so as to be sure of advancing fearlessly.

Now, after this preliminary explanation, I am going to read to you what I had written and have been asked to comment upon. These aphorisms perhaps call for explanation. I wrote this, inspired perhaps by the reading I was just speaking to you about, but it was more than anything the expression of a personal experience:

“One must be spontaneous in order to be divine.”

This is what I have just explained to you. Then the question arises: how to be spontaneous?

“One must be perfectly simple in order to be spontaneous.”

And how to be perfectly simple?

“One must be absolutely sincere in order to be perfectly simple.”

And now, what does it mean to be absolutely sincere?

“To be absolutely sincere is not to have any division, any contradiction in one’s being.”

If you are made of pieces which are not only different but often quite contradictory, these pieces necessarily create a division in your being. For example, you have one part in yourself which
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aspire for the divine life, to know the Divine, to unite with Him, to live Him integrally, and then you have another part which has attachments, desires — which it calls “needs” — and which not only seeks these things but is quite upset when it does not have them. There are other contradictions, but this one is the most flagrant. There are others, for instance, like wanting to surrender completely to the Divine, to give oneself up totally to His Will and His Guidance, and at the same time, when the experience comes — a common experience on the path when one sincerely tries to give oneself up to the Divine — the feeling that one is nothing, that one can do nothing, that one doesn’t even exist outside the Divine; that is to say, if He were not there, one would not exist and could not do anything, one would not be anything at all.... This experience naturally comes as a help on the path of total self-giving, but there is a part of the being which, when the experience comes, rises up in a terrible revolt and says, “But, excuse me! I insist on existing, I insist on being something, I insist on doing things myself, I want to have a personality.” And naturally, the second one undoes all that the first had done.

These are not exceptional cases, this happens very frequently. I could give you innumerable examples of such contradictions in the being: when one part tries to take a step forward, the other one comes and demolishes everything. So you have to begin again all the time, and every time it is demolished. That is why you must do this work of sincerity which, when you perceive in your being a part that pulls the other way, makes you take it up carefully, educate it as one educates a child and put it in harmony with the central part. That is the work of sincerity and it is indispensable.

And naturally, when there is a unity, an agreement, a harmony among all the wills of the being, your being can become simple, candid and uniform in its action and tendencies. It is only when the whole being is grouped around a single central movement that you can be spontaneous. For if, within you, there
is something which is turned towards the Divine and awaits the inspiration and impulse, and at the same time there is another part of the being which seeks its own ends and works to realise its own desires, you no longer know where you stand, and you can no longer be sure of what may happen, for one part can not only undo but totally contradict what the other wants to do.

And surely, to be in harmony with what is said in *Wu Wei*, after having seen very clearly what is necessary and what ought to be done, it is recommended not to put either violence or too much zest into the realisation of this programme, for an excess of zest is detrimental to the peace and tranquillity and calm necessary for the divine Consciousness to express itself through the individual. And it comes to this:

Balance is indispensable, the path that carefully avoids opposite extremes is indispensable, too much haste is dangerous, impatience prevents you from advancing; and at the same time, inertia puts a drag on your feet.

So for all things, the middle path as the Buddha called it, is the best.

*(Silence)*

There are two other questions here which are corollaries. The first one is this:

“What do you mean by these words: ‘When you are in difficulty, widen yourself’?”

I am speaking, of course, of difficulties on the path of yoga, incomprehension, limitations, things like obstacles, which prevent you from advancing. And when I say “widen yourself”, I mean widen your consciousness.

Difficulties always arise from the ego, that is, from your more or less egoistic personal reaction to circumstances, events and people around you, to the conditions of your life. They also
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come from that feeling of being closed up in a sort of shell, which prevents your consciousness from uniting with higher and vaster realities.

One may very well think that one wants to be vast, wants to be universal, that all is the expression of the Divine, that one must have no egoism — one may think all sorts of things — but that is not necessarily a cure, for very often one knows what one ought to do, and yet one doesn’t do it, for one reason or another.

But if, when you have to face anguish, suffering, revolt, pain or a feeling of helplessness — whatever it may be, all the things that come to you on the path and which precisely are your difficulties — if physically, that is to say, in your body-consciousness, you can have the feeling of widening yourself, one could say of unfolding yourself — you feel as it were all folded up, one fold on another like a piece of cloth which is folded and refolded and folded again — so if you have this feeling that what is holding and strangling you and making you suffer or paralysing your movement, is like a too closely, too tightly folded piece of cloth or like a parcel that is too well-tied, too well-packed, and that slowly, gradually, you undo all the folds and stretch yourself out exactly as one unfolds a piece of cloth or a sheet of paper and spreads it out flat, and you lie flat and make yourself very wide, as wide as possible, spreading yourself out as far as you can, opening yourself and stretching out in an attitude of complete passivity with what I could call “the face to the light”: not curling back upon your difficulty, doubling up on it, shutting it in, so to say, into yourself, but, on the contrary, unfurling yourself as much as you can, as perfectly as you can, putting the difficulty before the Light — the Light which comes from above — if you do that in all the domains, and even if mentally you don’t succeed in doing it — for it is sometimes difficult — if you can imagine yourself doing this physically, almost materially, well, when you have finished unfolding yourself and stretching yourself out, you will find that more than three-quarters of the difficulty is gone. And then just
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a little work of receptivity to the Light and the last quarter will disappear.

This is much easier than struggling against a difficulty with one’s thought, for if you begin to discuss with yourself, you will find that there are arguments for and against which are so convincing that it is quite impossible to get out of it without a higher light. Here, you do not struggle against the difficulty, you do not try to convince yourself; ah! you simply stretch out in the Light as though you lay stretched on the sands in the sun. And you let the Light do its work. That’s all.

(Silence)

And here is the other question:

“What is the easiest way of forgetting oneself?”

Naturally that depends on each one; everyone has his special way of forgetting himself, which is the best for him. But obviously there is a fairly general method which may be applied in various forms: to occupy oneself with something else. Instead of being occupied with oneself, one may be busy with someone else or with others or some work or an interesting activity requiring concentration.

And it is still the same thing: instead of doubling up on oneself and brooding over oneself or coddling oneself as it were, like the most precious thing in the world, if one can unfold oneself and get busy with something else, something which is not quite one’s own self, then that is the simplest and quickest way of forgetting oneself.

There are many others but this one is within everyone’s reach. So there we are, my children.

Now, if you have nothing to say about this subject or any other, we can remain silent.