“The human being is at home and safe in the material body; the body is his protection. There are some who are full of contempt for their bodies and think that things will be much better and easier after death without them. But in fact the body is your fortress and your shelter. While you are lodged in it the forces of the hostile world find it difficult to have a direct hold upon you.... Directly you enter any realm of this [vital] world, its beings gather round you to get out of you all you have, to draw what they can and make it a food and a prey. If you have no strong light and force radiating from within you, you move there without your body as if you had no coat to protect you against a chill and bleak atmosphere, no house to shield you, even no skin covering you, your nerves exposed and bare. There are men who say, ‘How unhappy I am in this body’, and think of death as an escape! But after death you have the same vital surroundings and are in danger from the same forces that are the cause of your misery in this life....

“It is here upon earth, in the body itself, that you must acquire a complete knowledge and learn to use a full and complete power. Only when you have done that will you be free to move about with entire security in all the worlds.”

Questions and Answers 1929–1931 (12 May 1929)

(A child) After death people enter the vital world, but those who do good go to paradise?

Where is your paradise? Who has taught you that? They have spoken to you of heaven and hell and purgatory?... No? Not
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of all that? From where did you gather your idea of paradise? From which book?

*I have heard about it.*

But from whom?

*I do not remember now.*

It is generally what religious priests say to the faithful to encourage them to do good. For it is a notorious fact that life is not more easy for the good than for the wicked; usually it is the contrary: the wicked succeed better than the good! So people who are not very spiritual say to themselves: “Why should I take the trouble of being good? It is better to be wicked and have an easy life.” It is very difficult to make them understand that there are many kinds of good and that sometimes it is worth the trouble perhaps to make an effort to be good. So to make this intelligible to the least intelligent, they are told: “There, it is very simple. If you are quite obedient, quite nice, quite unselfish, if you always do good deeds, and if you believe in the dogmas we teach, well, when you die, God will send you to Paradise. If you have sometimes good will, sometimes bad, if, sometimes you do good, sometimes you don’t and if you think very much of yourself and very little of others, then when you die, you will be sent to Purgatory for another experience. And then if you are thoroughly wicked, if you are always doing harm to others, doing all kinds of bad things and you do not care about the good of anyone and particularly if you do not believe in the dogma that we teach you, then you will go straight to Hell and for eternity.”

This is one of the prettiest inventions I have ever heard of: they have invented *eternal hell*. That is to say, once you are in hell, it is for eternity.... You understand what that means, for eternity? You will be tortured and burnt (in the hot countries
you are burnt, in the cold countries you are frozen), and that for eternity. That is it. So I do not know who taught you those pretty things; but they are simply inventions to make people obey, to keep them under control.

There are teachings which are not like that. There are religions which are not like that. But still one can, in a poetic, picturesque, descriptive manner speak of a paradise; because this paradise means a wonderful place where there is utmost joy and happiness and comfort.... And yet that depends upon the religion to which you belong. For there are heavens where you pass your time singing praises to God, you do nothing else — but in the end that must be somewhat wearisome; however, there you pass your time playing music and singing the praises of God. There are other heavens, on the contrary, where you enjoy all possible pleasures, all that you desired to have during your life, you have in heaven. There are heavens where you are constantly in blissful meditation — but for people who are not keen on meditating, that must be rather tiresome. However, that depends, you know: they have invented all kinds of things so that people may really want to be wise and obey the laws given to them.

And man’s imagination is so creative, such a form-maker, that there really are in the world places like these heavens. There are places also like these hells and there are places like these purgatories. Man creates out of nothing the things he imagines. If your consciousness is enlightened, then you can be pulled out of these places; otherwise you are shut up, imprisoned there by the very belief you had when alive. You will tell me that it is equal to a life, but it is an altogether illusory and extremely limited existence. It is real only for those who think like that. As soon as you think differently, it does not exist for you any longer; you can come out of it. You can pull a person out of these places, and immediately he perceives that he was imprisoned in his own formation.

Man has an extraordinary power of creation. He has created
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a whole set of godheads in his own image, having the same faults as himself, doing on a bigger scale, with greater power whatever he does. These beings have a relative existence, but still it is an independent existence, just like your thought. When you have a thought, a well-made mental formation which goes out of you, it becomes an independent entity and continues on its way and it does that for which it was made. It continues to act independently of you. That is why you must be on your guard. If you have made such a formation and it has gone out, it has gone out to do its work; and after a time you find out that it was perhaps not a very happy thing to have a thought like that, that this formation was not very beneficial; now that it has gone out, it is very difficult for you to get hold of it again. You must have considerable occult knowledge. It has gone out and is moving on its way.... Supposing in a moment of great anger (I do not say that you do so, but still) when you were in quite a rage against someone, you said: “Ah! couldn’t some misfortune befall him?” Your formation has gone on its way. It has gone out and you have no longer any control over it; and it goes and organises some misfortune or other: it is going to do its work. And after sometime the misfortune arrives. Happily, you do not usually have sufficient knowledge to tell yourself: “Oh! It is I who am responsible”, but that is the truth.

Note that this power of formation has a great advantage, if one knows how to use it. You can make good formations and if you make them properly, they will act in the same way as the others. You can do a lot of good to people just by sitting quietly in your room, perhaps even more good than by undergoing a lot of trouble externally. If you know how to think correctly, with force and intelligence and kindness, if you love someone and wish him well very sincerely, deeply, with all your heart, that does him much good, much more certainly than you think. I have said this often; for example, to those who are here, who learn that someone in their family is very ill and feel that childish impulse of wanting to rush immediately to the spot to attend to
the sick person. I tell you, unless it is an exceptional case and
there is nobody to attend on the sick person (and at times even
in such a case), if you know how to keep the right attitude and
concentrate with affection and good will upon the sick person,
if you know how to pray for him and make helpful formations,
you will do him much more good than if you go to nurse him,
feed him, help him wash himself, indeed all that everybody can
do. Anybody can nurse a person. But not everybody can make
good formations and send out forces that act for healing.

In any case, to come back to our paradise, it is a childish de-
formation — ignorant or political — of something which is true
in a sense but not quite like that. I have told you many times
and I could not repeat it too often, that one is not built up of
one single piece. We have within us many states of being and
each state of being has its own life. All this is put together in
one single body, so long as you have a body, and acts through
that single body; so that gives you the feeling that it is one single
person, a single being. But there are many beings and partic-
ularly there are concentrations on different levels: just as you
have a physical being, you have a vital being, you have a mental
being, you have a psychic being, you have many others and all
possible intermediaries. But it is a little complicated, you might
not understand. Suppose you were living a life of desire, passion
and impulse: you live with your vital being dominant in you; but
if you live with spiritual effort, with great good will, the desire
to do things well and an unselfishness, a will for progress, you
live with the psychic being dominant in you. Then, when you are
about to leave your body, all these beings start to disperse. Only
if you are a very advanced yogi and have been able to unify your
being around the divine centre, do these beings remain bound
together. If you have not known how to unify yourself, then at
the time of death all that is dispersed: each one returns to its
domain. For example, with regard to the vital being, all your
different desires will be separated and each one run towards its
own realisation, quite independently, for the physical being will
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no longer be there to hold them together. But if you have united
your consciousness with the psychic consciousness, when you
die you remain conscious of your psychic being and the psychic
being returns to the psychic world which is a world of bliss and
delight and peace and tranquillity and of a growing knowledge.
So, if you like to call that a paradise, it is all right; because in
fact, to the extent to which you are identified with your psychic
being, you remain conscious of it, you are one with it, and it is
immortal and goes to its immortal domain to enjoy a perfectly
happy life or rest. If you like to call that paradise, call it paradise.
If you are good, if you have become conscious of your psychic
and live in it, well, when your body dies, you will go with your
psychic being to take rest in the psychic world, in a blissful state.

But if you have lived in your vital with all its impulses, each
impulse will try to realise itself here and there... For example,
a miser who is concentrated upon his money, when he dies, the
part of the vital that was interested in his money will be stuck
there and will continue to watch over the money so that nobody
may take it. People do not see him, but he is there all the same,
and is very unhappy if something happens to his precious money.
I knew quite well a lady who had a good amount of money and
children; she had five children who were all prodigals each one
more than the other. The same amount of care she had taken in
amassing the money, they seemed to take in squandering it; they
spent it at random. So when the poor old lady died, she came
to see me and told me: "Ah, now they are going to squander
my money!" And she was extremely unhappy. I consoled her a
little, but I had a good deal of difficulty in persuading her not to
keep watching over her money so that it might not be wasted.

Now, if you live exclusively in your physical consciousness
(it is difficult, for you have, after all, thoughts and feelings, but
if you live exclusively in your physical), when the physical being
disappears, you disappear at the same time, it is finished... There
is a spirit of the form: your form has a spirit which persists for
seven days after your death. The doctors have declared that you
are dead, but the spirit of your form lives, and not only does it live but it is conscious in most of the cases. But that lasts for seven or eight days and afterwards it is dissolved. I am not speaking of yogis; I am speaking of ordinary people. Yogis have no laws, it is quite different; for them the world is different. I am speaking to you of ordinary men living an ordinary life; for these it is like that.

So the conclusion is that if you want to preserve your consciousness, it would be better to centralise it on a part of your being that is immortal; otherwise it will vanish like a flame in the air. And it is very fortunate, for if it were otherwise, there would be perhaps gods or types of superior men who would create hells and heavens as they do in their material imagination, where they would imprison you; you would be imprisoned in heaven or in hell according as you pleased or displeased them. It would be a very critical situation and happily it is not like that.

It is said that there is a god of Death. Is it true?

Yes, I call it the spirit of Death. I know it very well. And that is an extraordinary organisation. You do not know to what an extent it is organised.

I believe there are many of these spirits of death, I believe there are hundreds. I have met at least two of them. One I met in France and the other in Japan, and they were very different; which leads one to believe that probably in accordance with the mental culture, the education, the country and beliefs there should be different spirits. But there are spirits of all the manifestations of Nature: there are spirits of fire, spirits of air, of water, of rain, of wind; and there are spirits of death.

Each spirit of death, whatever it may be, has a claim to a certain number of deaths per day. Indeed it is a fantastic organisation; it is a kind of alliance between the vital forces and the forces of Nature. For example, if the spirit of death has decided: “That is the number of people to which I am entitled”,

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let us say four or five or six, or one or two persons, it depends on the day; it has decided that certain persons would die, it goes straight and settles down beside the person about to die. But if you happen to be conscious (not the person), if you see the spirit going to a person and you do not want him to die, then you can, if you possess a certain occult power, tell it: “No, I forbid you to take him.” It is a thing that has happened, not once but several times, in Japan and here. It was not the same spirit. That is what makes me say that there must be many.

— I don’t want him to die.
— But I have a right to one death!
— Go and find someone who is ready to die.

So I have seen several cases: sometimes it is just a neighbourhood who dies suddenly in place of the other, sometimes it is an acquaintance and sometimes it is an enemy. Naturally, there is a relation, good or bad, of neighbourhood (or anything else) which externally looks like chance. But it is the spirit who has taken its dead. The spirit has a claim to one death, it will have one death. You can tell it: “I forbid you to take this one”, and have the power of sending it away, and the spirit can do nothing but go away; but it does not give up its due and goes elsewhere. There is another death.

It is the same thing with fire. I saw the spirit of fire, particularly in Japan because fire is an extraordinary thing in that country. When a fire starts, some eighty houses burn: a whole quarter. It is something fantastic. The houses are of wood and they burn like match-boxes; you see a fire kindling and then all of a sudden, puff!... You have never seen a match-box catching fire? a flash! like that, a flash! one, two, three, ten, twenty houses burnt down before my eyes!... So there are spirits of fire. One day, I was in my bed. I was concentrating, looking at people. Suddenly I saw something like a cloud of flames drawing close to the house. I looked and I saw it was a conscious being.

— Eh! what are you here for?
— I have the right to burn the house, start a fire.
— That’s possible, I told it, but not here. And it could not resist.

It is a question of who proves the stronger. I said: “No, here you can’t burn, that’s all!” Five minutes later I heard cries: “Ah! Ah!” Two or three houses farther away, a house had caught fire. It had gone there as I had forbidden it to come to my house. It had a claim to one house. There we are!

*Sometimes when people are dying, they know that they are about to die. Why don’t they tell the spirit to go away?*

Ah! well, that depends upon the people. Two things are necessary. First of all, nothing in your being, no part of your being should want to die. That does not happen often. You have always a defeatist in you somewhere: something that is tired, something that is disgusted, something that has had enough of it, something that is lazy, something that does not want to struggle and says: “Well! Ah! Let it be finished, so much the better.” That is sufficient, you are dead.

But it is a fact: if nothing, absolutely nothing in you consents to die, you will not die. For someone to die, there is always a second, perhaps the hundredth part of a second when he gives his consent. If there is not this second of consent, he does not die.

I knew people who should have really died according to all physical and vital laws; and they refused. They said: “No, I will not die”, and they lived. There are others who do not need at all to die, but they are of that kind and say: “Ah! Well! Yes, so much the better, it will be finished”, and it is finished. Even that much, even nothing more than that: you need not have a persistent wish, you have only to say: “Well, yes, I have had enough!” and it is finished. So it is truly like that. As you say, you may have death standing by your bedside and tell him: “I do not want you, go away”, and it will be obliged to go away.
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But usually one gives way, for one must struggle, one must be strong, one must be very courageous and enduring, must have a great faith in the importance of life; like someone, for example, who feels very strongly that he has still something to do and he must absolutely do it. But who is sure he has not within him the least bit of a defeatist, somewhere, who just yields and says: “It is all right”?... It is here, the necessity of unifying oneself.

Whatever the way we follow, the subject we study, we always arrive at the same result. The most important thing for an individual is to unify himself around his divine centre; in that way he becomes a true individual, master of himself and his destiny. Otherwise, he is a plaything of forces that toss him about like a piece of cork on a river. He goes where he does not want to go, he is made to do things he does not want to do, and finally he falls into a hole without having the strength to hold on. But if you are consciously organised, unified around the divine centre, ruled and directed by it, you are master of your destiny. That is worth the trouble of attempting.... In any case, I find it preferable to be the master rather than the slave. It is a rather unpleasant sensation to feel yourself pulled by the strings and made to do things whether you want to or not — it makes no difference — but to be compelled to act because something pulls you by the strings, something which you do not even see — that is exasperating. However, I do not know, but I found it very annoying, even when I was a little child. At five, it began to seem to me quite intolerable and I sought for a way so that it might be otherwise — without people getting a chance to scold me. For I knew nobody who could help me and I did not have the chance that you have, someone who can tell you: “This is what you have to do!” There was nobody to tell me that. I had to find it out all by myself. And I found it. I started at five. And you, you were five long ago.... Voilà.