3 September 1958

_Sweet Mother, the other day you told me that it was necessary to learn how to discipline the imagination._

Yes.

_How is it done?_

Imagination is something very complex and manifold — what is vaguely called “imagination”.

It can be the capacity for seeing and recording, noting the forms in some mental or other domain. There are artistic, literary, poetic domains, domains of action, scientific domains, all belonging to the mind — not a very high and abstract mind, a mind above the physical mind which, without our knowing it, pours out constantly through the individual and collective mind to manifest in action.

Some people, through a special faculty, are in contact with these domains, take up one formation or other that is there, draw them to themselves and give them an expression. This power of expression is different in different people, but those who can open themselves to these domains, to _see_ things there, to draw these forms towards themselves and express them — either in literature or in painting or music or in action or science — are, according to the degree of their power of expression either very highly talented beings or else geniuses.

There are higher geniuses still. They are people who can open to a higher region, a higher force which, passing through the mental layers, comes and takes a form in a human mind and reveals itself in the world as new truths, new philosophical systems, new spiritual teachings, which are the works and at the same time the actions of the great beings who come to take birth
on earth. That is an imagination which can be called “Truth-imagination”. These higher forces, when they come down into the earth-atmosphere, take living, active, powerful forms, spread throughout the world and prepare a new age.

These two kinds of imagination are what could be called higher imaginations.

And now, to come down to a more ordinary level, everyone has in him, in a greater or lesser measure, the power to give form to his mental activity and use this form either in his ordinary activity or to create and realise something. We are all the time, always, creating images, creating forms. We send them into the atmosphere without even knowing that we are doing so — they go roaming about, pass from one person to another, meet companions, sometimes join together and get on happily, sometimes create conflicts, and there are battles; for often, very often, in these mental imaginations there is a small element of will which tries to realise itself, and then everyone tries to send out his formation so that it can act, so that things can happen as he wants and, as everyone does this, it creates a general confusion. If our eyes were open to the vision of all these forms in the atmosphere, we would see very amazing things: battlefields, waves, onsets, retreats of a crowd of small mental entities which are constantly thrown out into the air and always try to realise themselves. All these formations have a common tendency to want to materialise and realise themselves physically, and as they are countless — they are far too many for there to be room enough on earth to manifest them — they jostle and elbow one another, they try to push back those which do not agree with them or even form armies marching in good order, always to take up the available room both in time and space — it is only a very small space compared with the countless number of creations.

So, individually, this is what happens. Some people do all that without knowing it — perhaps everybody — and they are constantly tossed from one thing to another, and hope, wish, desire, are disappointed, sometimes happy, sometimes in despair,
for they don’t have any control or mastery over these things. But the beginning of wisdom is to look at ourselves thinking and to see this phenomenon, become aware of this constant projection into the atmosphere of small living entities which are trying to manifest. All this comes out of the mental atmosphere which we carry within ourselves. Once we see and observe, we can begin to sort them out, that is, to push back what is not in conformity with our highest will or aspiration and allow to move towards manifestation only the formations which can help us to progress and develop normally.

This is the control of active thought, and that was what I meant the other day.

How many times you sit and become aware that the thought is beginning to form images for itself, to tell itself a story; and so, when you have become a little expert at it, not only do you see unfolding before you the history of what you would like to happen in life, in your own life, but you can take something away, add a detail, perfect your work, make a really fine story in which everything conforms with your highest aspiration. And once you have made a complete harmonious construction, as perfect as you can make it, then you open your hands and let the bird fly away.

If it is well made, it always realises itself in the end. And that is what one doesn’t know.

But the thing is realised in the course of time, sometimes long afterwards, when you have forgotten your story, can no longer remember having told it to yourself — you have changed much, are thinking about other things, making other stories, and the first one no longer interests you; and if you are not very attentive, when the result of the first story comes, you are already very far away from it and no longer remember at all that this is the result of your own story.... And that is why it is so important to control yourself, for if within you there are multiple and contradictory wills — not only wills but tendencies, orientations, levels of life — all this causes battles in your life. For example, at your highest
level you have fashioned a beautiful story which you send out into the world, but then, perhaps the next day, perhaps on the very same day, perhaps a little later, you have come down to a much more material level, and these things from above seem to you a little... fairylike, unreal; and you begin to make very concrete, very utilitarian formations which are not always very pretty... and these too go out.

I have known people with such opposite sides in their nature, so contradictory, that one day they could make a magnificent, luminous, powerful formation for realisation, and then the next day a defeatist, dark, black formation — a formation of despair — and so both would go out. And I was able to follow in the course of circumstances the beautiful one being realised, and while it was being realised, the dark one demolishing what the first one had done. And that is how it is in the larger lines of life as in its smaller details. And all that because one does not watch oneself thinking, because one believes one is the slave of these contradictory movements, because one says, “Oh! Today I am not feeling well. Oh! Today things seem sad to me”, and one says this as if it were an ineluctable fate against which one could do nothing. But if one stands back or ascends a step, one can look at all these things, put them in their place, keep some, destroy or get rid of those one does not want and put all one’s imaginative power — what is called imaginative — only in those one wants and which conform with one’s highest aspiration. That is what I call controlling one’s imagination.

It is very interesting. When one learns to do it and does it regularly one no longer has time to feel bored.

And instead of being a cork afloat on the waves of the sea and tossed here and there by each wave, defencelessly, one becomes a bird which opens its wings, flies above the waves and goes wherever it wants. That’s all.