May 13, 1967

(Y., a disciple, asks for Mother's permission to bring an orangutan to make it ‘participate in the education’.)

Some have already protested against Thoth [the disciple's first ape], if now there's an orangutan they'll reproach me! ... Because, naturally, the servants were afraid, even the neighbors, anyway it wasn't to their liking. Once Thoth walked into the bedroom, so the maid started howling; the neighbor came (luckily he has enough sense), he remained calm, just staring at Thoth, with some severity, probably. Then Thoth left without anything happening. But at other times when Thoth is upset, he tears bedsheets to pieces or whatever. Finally the neighbor came and told me the incident (that was long ago). I said to him, “You don't know the first thing about animals! You are lucky enough to have a peaceful nature, but animals are extremely sensitive to your feelings or sensation: if you are afraid, they instantly get afraid; if you are angry, they instantly get angry; and if you are gentle, kind, affable, they become gentle, kind, affable.” He understood quite well, and ever since all has been well. But he isn't alone in the house.... An orangutan is a big thing, you know!

That Thoth is really remarkable. Did I tell you what happened when I first saw him? (And I asked Y. very insistently whether she had taught him, but she hadn't said anything at all to him — not taught or said anything.) He came with her, and as soon as he saw me (he was on Y.'s arm), he folded his hands! And then he gave me a speech: his mouth moved; there weren't any sounds, but his mouth was moving. And an expression ... Then I complimented him, and he immediately leapt onto my knees, curled up in my arms, and ... went off into a semitrance — stopped moving, kept still. It lasted at least five minutes. After five minutes, I thought, “He can't just stay here forever, he should go now!” — then he opened his eyes and went away! ... The receptivity is far more remarkable than in human beings. Then he looked around, looked out of the window, well, took interest in the place. Then he again looked towards me, came back on my knees, and rested against my shoulder.

Long afterwards, a year afterwards, I asked Y. if he was in the habit of greeting with folded hands; she told me, “He's never done it, he did it only with you.” It's clearly a special sensitivity. You know, the sign of an absolute trust, curled up against me.

Now he is very tall, he is of mature years, he has teeth ... teeth like a leopard's, a leopard's canine teeth. But he is as gentle as a lamb. But an orangutan ...

She wants M. to bring an orangutan back from New Caledonia. Can you picture M. leading an orangutan by the hand!... That would be charming enough! (Mother laughs) ... And if he brought it to my room!

But animals really have a lot of charm. I must say we are on very good terms. The whole perversion brought into the human consciousness by mental activity isn't there (except in those that have lived with man), but those that came straight from outside have a simplicity, a sort of ingenuousness which is very charming. And an uncanny receptivity, you know, much more spontaneous than human receptivity.

Now it's different, there is a whole race of small children (I told you the other day), who are very receptive. And they are charming. Charming.