12 March 1951

_In the vital world, forces exist: do mental forms exist in the mental world?

Yes, there is a concrete mental world and there are mental forms which do not resemble vital forces but have their own law. There are many, innumerable mental forms. They are almost indestructible; one can only say that they change forms and relations, it is something very fluid, and moving all the time.

“...You can understand only what you already know in your own inner self. What strikes you in a book is what you have already experienced deep within you.... The knowledge that seems to come to you from outside is only an occasion for bringing out the knowledge that is within you.”

Questions and Answers 1929 (19 May)

_Why are certain subjects so very difficult?

That is due to many things — to the formation of the brain, to atavism, to the early years of education, particularly to atavism.

But there is a very interesting phenomenon here: each new idea forms a kind of small convolution in the brain, and that takes time. You see, you are told something which you have never heard before; you listen, but it is incomprehensible, it does not penetrate into your head. But if you hear the same thing a second time, a little later, it makes sense. It is because the shock of the new idea has done a little work in the brain and prepared just what was necessary for understanding. And not only does it build itself up, but it perfects itself. That is why if you read a difficult book, at the end of six months or a year you
will understand it infinitely better than at the first reading and, at times, in a very different way. This work in the brain is done without the participation of your active consciousness. The way the human being is at present constituted, the time factor must always be taken into account.

Is it the brain or the presence of thought that produces the shock?

No, it is the consciousness. Most people are not aware of it, but it works all the time in everyone.

“We say something that is quite clear, but the way in which it is understood is stupefying! Each sees in it something else than what was intended or even puts into it something that is quite the contrary of its sense. If you want to understand truly and avoid this kind of error, you must go behind the sound and the movement of the words and learn to listen in silence.”

Questions and Answers 1929 (19 May)

How can one learn to listen in silence?

It is a matter of attention. If you concentrate your attention on what is being said, with the will to understand it correctly, the silence is created spontaneously — it is attention that creates the silence.

Is it possible to get out of the “mental fortress”?\(^1\)

But there are people who do get out of the fortress! One can even send an army out of the fortress!

\(^1\) See the talk of 10 March 1951.
Questions and Answers

No, it is not the chief of the place who goes out, he clings to his fort: he orders out the soldiers. He values his fortress, for it is that which gives him the impression of existing and of being an individual.

**What if one gets rid of the fortress?**

Oh, but you must take care! You had better not get rid of it unless you are able to live without a fortress — something which is infinitely more difficult to do. What men generally do, with much effort and a good deal of suffering which gives them the impression that they are heroes, is to knock down their fortress... only to enter immediately into another! That does not make much difference from the standpoint of the Truth, but it gives them the impression of having made a great progress, because the old fortress is razed and they have built up another.

To live without a fortress is extremely difficult — people have the feeling that they are not living, that they are not individualised, that they are floating about. It is extremely difficult to live in something infinitely vast, moving, constantly changing, perpetually in progress, not to be held by anything to which one can cling, saying “I am this; this is my way of thinking.” It is very difficult, one must not try it too soon; there are those whose mind gets deranged by it.

**What is it that makes the mental construction?**

It is the mental ego which makes the construction and it clings to it desperately.

**Are the “I” and the ego the same thing?**

Generally they are.
12 March 1951

How does it happen that there are people who think one thing and say another?

Yes, that often happens. They think one thing and when they begin talking they say just the contrary. If thought controlled the tongue, many stupidities would be avoided. You lose control and speak on impulse any kind of nonsense; it is like a machine which begins talking for the pleasure of talking. That seems like an absurdity, but it is happening all the time; there are very few people who escape this. They say all kinds of things and they ask, “Why did I say all that?” They do not even know why. I know some who always say what the other wants to hear. The person with whom they are speaking says to himself, “He is going to tell me this or that,” or he fears, “I hope he will not tell me that,” and the other one, like a little puppet, begins to say it, very calmly without knowing why!

Is it because of a lack of will?

No, it is a mental deformation. There is not much will in this. If the will intervened, it would become less absurd, perhaps.

No, they are mental movements, the formation of the mind, the mental force which moves all the time, which comes and goes, like a squirrel in a cage which runs round and round and does not know why.

Then, is it a universal play?

No, not very universal; it exists in humanity, it is very human. How many human beings have a thought of their own? I am pretty sure there are none in ordinary humanity with its ordinary mental make-up. How many people have a thought as a result of reflection? Very few, and if they have it, they are considered terribly hard or remarkably intelligent or despotic or authoritative — they are covered with all sorts of compliments!
Questions and Answers

And that, simply because they have a precise fashion of thinking.

Take any general idea; for example: “Is the world's duration indefinite?” or “Has it a beginning and an end?” Who has a precise thought on this subject? Or again: “How did the earth begin and how did humanity commence on earth?” The mind is incapable of resolving this question; it will find itself before an indefinite number of possibilities and will not know how to choose. Then, what does it do, how does it choose? — by personal preference, the thought that gives it an agreeable, comfortable feeling; it says, “Yes, that must be it.” But if you are quite honest and scrupulous and do not allow your preferences to come into play, how will you decide? It is a subject close enough to humanity for it to take an interest in it, isn't it? Earth is, after all, its domain. Well, if you read one book, it will tell you one thing; if you read another, it will tell you another. Then the religions with their theories take a hand in the matter and, moreover, they will tell you that such and such an idea is the “absolute Truth” and you must believe it, otherwise you will be damned! You read the scientists — they will tell you scientific things. You read the philosophers — they will tell you philosophical things. You read the spiritualists, they will dish up spirituality for you and... you will be exactly at the same point from which you started. But there are people who like to have a kind of stability in their mind (precisely those who build “fortresses” — they like to be in a fortress very much, it gives them a comfortable sensation), so they make a choice, and if they have sufficient mental strength, they make a choice out of a considerable number of ideas; then they trim it up for you, set up a fine wall by putting each thing in what they consider to be its proper place (that is, there must not be too many contradictions close together lest they clash! It must make a proper organisation) and they tell you, “Now, I know!” — They know nothing at all!

It is quite interesting, for the more mental activity one has, the more does one indulge in this little game. And there are
ideas to which one clings! One hangs on to them as though all life depended upon it! I have known people who had fixed upon one central idea in their formation and said, “All the rest may go to pieces, I don’t care, but this idea will stand: this is the truth.” And when they come to yoga, amusingly enough it is this idea which is constantly battered, all the time! All events, all circumstances come and strike at it until it begins to totter, and then one fine day they say in despair, “Ah, my idea has gone.”

Someone has said rather poetically, “One must know how to lose all to win all.” And it is true, especially for the mind, for if you do not know how to lose everything, you can gain nothing.

How did this earth begin?

Ask the scientists, they will tell you!

If, finally, progress consists in unlearning all that one has learned, what is the use of learning?

But it is as with gymnastics. You make all kinds of movements to form your body and make it strong, but that does not mean that you are going to spend all your life lifting weights and exercising on parallel bars! You may continue to do that as a pastime, as a profession, but surely it is not the supreme goal. For the mind it is the same thing. To have a mind capable of progressing, of adapting itself to a new life, of opening itself to higher forces, it must be put through all kinds of gymnastics. That is why children are sent to school, it is not in order that they may remember all that they learn — who remembers what he has learnt? When they are obliged to teach others, later on, they have to relearn it all, they have forgotten everything. It comes back quickly, but they have forgotten it. But if they had never gone to school, if they had never learned and had to begin
everything... well, when you begin to do parallel bars at forty-five, it hurts, doesn’t it? It is the same thing for the brain, it lacks plasticity. Do you know what the best gymnastics is? It is to have a daily conversation with a metaphysician because there is nothing concrete there, you cannot concentrate on something that has a form, an objective reality; indeed, everything is carried on exclusively with words in a field of abstraction, it is purely mental gymnastics. And if you can enter into the mental formation of a metaphysician and are able to understand and answer him, it is perfect gymnastics!

(A mathematician disciple:) The same thing applies to mathematicians, I suppose?

Yes.

If at the time of death the vital being is attacked in the vital world by hostile forces or entities, does it not look for a shelter somewhere?

Yes, it is for this reason that in all countries and in all religions, it is recommended that for a period of at least seven days after someone’s death, people should gather and think of him. Because when you think of him with affection (without any inner disorder, without weeping, without any of those distraught passions), if you can be calm, your atmosphere becomes a kind of beacon for him, and when he is attacked by hostile forces (I am speaking of the vital being of course, not the psychic being which goes to take rest), he may feel altogether lost, not know what to do and find himself in great distress; then he sees through affinity the light of those who are thinking of him with affection and he rushes there. It happens almost constantly that a vital formation, a part of the vital being of the dead person (or at times the whole vital if it is well organised) takes shelter in the aura, the atmosphere of the people or the person who loved him. There
12 March 1951

are people who always carry with them a part of the vital of the person who is gone. That is the real utility of these so-called ceremonies, which otherwise have no sense.

It is preferable to do this without ceremonies. Ceremonies are, if anything, rather harmful, for a very simple reason: When you are busy with a ceremony, you think more about that than about the person. When you are busy with gestures, movements, with the following of a ritual, you think much more of all that than of the person who is dead. Moreover, people perform these ceremonies most of the time for that very reason, for they are almost always in the habit of trying to forget. The fact is that one of the two principal occupations of man is to try to forget what is painful to him, and the other is to try to seek amusement in order to escape boredom. These are the two principal occupations of humanity, that is, humanity spends half of its time in doing nothing true.

And when people get bored (some do not absolutely need to keep busy, or they have the misfortune of being rich) they do silly things! The origin of all excesses, all human stupidity is “ennui”, what is called dullness, the state in which you are like a damp rag: you do not react to anything and are compelled to whip yourself (figuratively) just to make yourself move and get along.

In Nature’s economy, moments of respite are given to men to rediscover themselves but they do not know how to make use of them.

When going over the conclusion of this talk, Mother made the following remark (10 March 1965):

I would say many things now...

For instance, when the Lord draws closest to men, to establish a conscious contact with them, it is then that in their folly they commit the grossest stupidities.

This is true, altogether true, it is at the moment when all is silenced in order that man may become conscious of his origin
Questions and Answers

that he, in his folly, in order to distract himself, conceives or carries out the worst stupidities.

*To distract himself because he is unable to bear the force of the Light?*

Yes.

*The pressure is too strong?*

Yes, there are those who are afraid, they are panic-stricken. They cannot bear it so they turn to anything at all to get out of it.