

CONSCIENCE

J.G. Bennett, Sherborne House

Foreword:

In the Fall of 1971, John Bennett inaugurated the International Academy for Continuous Education at Sherborne House, Gloucestershire, England. From that time until his death three and half years later, he worked with groups of up to 90 students who enrolled for ten month courses, in a residential school environment. The organization and the curriculum of the school was based on his experience with Gurdjieff at the Prieuré, his own earlier community at Coombe Springs and his frequent visits to a Benedictine monastery in France. A fundamental technique was the use of a weekly theme. On Monday morning the entire community would meet and Bennett would set a theme for the week, which was described as something to ponder and think about when one's attention was not needed elsewhere; a focus for self-observation. On the following Friday evening, the community would meet back again and students would report on their observations from the week. Often the Monday morning theme presentation was brief, and was preceded by an extended general discussion of the previous week's theme, so giving three distinct perspectives.

The following article is a transcription of three sessions, which occurred during the last months of the Third Basic Course.

Ben Bennett, 2014

Theme Presentation: Monday May 27th, 1974

J.G.B: You remember in the chapter 'The Organization of Man's Existence', when Ashieta Shiemash has chosen his initiates to whom he will reveal the central secret of his own mission, he says to them that only he will deserve to be called and be in the true sense a son of God who has in himself Conscience. And this chapter, and the whole of the Ashieta Shiemash message is this: that one can live with Conscience in one's ordinary state and this will liberate one.

Now, the time has come when we should set ourselves to understand what this means, what the word Conscience means, what it stands for. I don't want to give any explanations. I only want to remind you that we have spoken about Conscience many times; we've heard it referred to many times in readings and you probably can easily recall some definitions of conscience. Let us take one example. When Hassein asks Beelzebub 'What is right and wrong for these three brained beings?' and he says 'Right is that from doing which one's conscience is at peace and wrong is that from doing which one's conscience

makes one suffer', but that has an awkwardness about it because it can come by just suggestion that something is wrong, and then it works the other way round: we suffer because we think it's wrong, we don't see that there is something different, that something is wrong because we suffer, because we suffer in a particular way. The way morality works is to condition us to be afraid of certain kinds of behaviour and to suffer if we fall into them. We suffer because we're conditioned to think of them as wrong. This is a false conscience because it is imposed on us from outside by people who may not have any objective awareness, and also that kind of so-called conscience is fixed, it has no freedom to discover the particular requirement of a particular situation. Conscience is the other way round.

I'm saying that you should look at Conscience now because this has begun to stir in most of you but you don't yet properly recognize it. But maybe if we speak about this on Friday, between us all we shall arrive at something which will really throw light on it for all of us, although I do know that many mistakes can be made. I do believe that it would be far better that we should arrive at this by what we all can say about it rather than by my trying to give you some more explanations or even give you exercises which would perhaps tend to bring this out. I think I said at the beginning when somebody said what is the aim, what can we hope for from this, I think I said something that there is the possibility of arriving at Conscience and being able to live by Conscience. Some people have come to that.

Theme Observations

Friday, May 31st, 1974

Student Massimo M: Instead of doing things which I have never done before, stealing all the time, stealing all the time from the outside from my relationship with someone else, always lying to everything and when I came back I told you that I was worse than when I came and maybe I have always been like that it just came out and I saw it. This week, and the other week that theme, I think has helped me to keep going because whenever I felt this week like I didn't want to do something or when I was going to fall again in the same trap I just (inaudible) starting I saw how I was behaving that week, went back to those days and I've been trying to do my best, you know, keep going. I don't know if that can be called Conscience or if it is that it's related to the theme. It's like this week showed what wanting to work is for somehow, of being as much different as I can from that Massimo in those days.

J.G.B: You see Conscience is like a guest, a very noble guest who comes to your house and you don't recognize him and you make him very uncomfortable, because he is a very sensitive guest, and because you don't recognize him you behave in front of him in a way that's very painful to him. Then a moment comes when you begin to see that this guest is yourself, then you begin to feel this uncomfortable and you feel ashamed because you've not treated this guest property.

It is true what you say, that you are blind. When you were saying that, this picture came into my mind of Conscience as a guest whom we don't recognize. There is that difference that he can see and we can't see. He sees who we are but we can't see who he is. Then when you begin to realize that this guest is present in you, you begin not to want to offend him and make him suffer, this is this state that you described this week.

Student Virginia K: I think that what I saw this week more clearly than I have at any other time is that what Conscience really wants is... Its nature really is to want perfection, not goodness, and not decency and not civilized behavior, but really perfection, it really wants everything.

You know when you do something and you do something right, you do something it wants and then everything is very clear for a time and I mean glaringly clear, you're very clear and your faults and you see so much that you don't see ordinarily of what you could do, and what you should do, and there's such a split feeling about that, I mean one feeling of really wanting to listen and just be its servant and then that tremendous aversion to it as well not wanting to hear anything. It seems to me that when you cut yourself off from it, when you don't listen for a while that you can't really hear it any more as clearly then I have a sort of dull, unhappy, ashamed feeling all the time but it's sort of a nebulous feeling without, as if Conscience is still talking but I no longer can hear and all I can feel is just this disease that is constant. One of the things about it that I don't understand really is that it seems as if it shouldn't be this way, but when you are in that state when you can see yourself what you should be doing more clearly, unfortunately you see it about other people as well, I mean you are more critical in that state in that way.

J.G.B.: First of all, it is right to connect Conscience with clarity and when we put Conscience aside then we do not see clearly and this enables us, makes it possible for us to live in a way that otherwise we couldn't bear to. There is a part of us that doesn't want to be seen, that can only let itself go when there's no one looking. This is really the negative, the negative part of us, the part of us that wants to be separate, that doesn't want to accept other people because anything, anyone or anything that sees it is somehow a hindrance to it. When we're thinking you know sometimes we realize that thoughts come into our minds that we just wouldn't want anyone to be able to see those thoughts. There are things we do—all of us, everyone—that we just wouldn't want anyone to see us doing, but Conscience is more penetrating because it not only sees our outward actions it sees our inward thoughts and our states. This part of us that doesn't want to be seen, of course doesn't want to be seen by Conscience. You said something at the end that I wanted to comment on and I've forgotten what it was, what did you say at the very end?

Student: I spoke about how when this glaring light is thrown on you, it also seems to be thrown on other people.

J.G.B.: Oh yes. Yes, this is very true. It is another way of escape, another way of what Gurdjieff called self-calming: 'Yes I'm like this but other people are like it too'. This is one great get-out. 'Yes, perhaps I am corrupt, I do certain things, but then everyone else in my position does the same' this is the Watergate plea. And at the same time this is also necessary. We do need to see other people and not deceive ourselves about them any more than we deceive ourselves about ourselves.

Student: When you're in that good state, it isn't like that... it's the other way.

J.G.B.: No, no I'm just saying this that there is the negative one. I mean let's face it—there is. But closely connected with Conscience also is Compassion because we mustn't think that Conscience is critical of us. This is how it feels to us. You know if you put yourself in the position of parents whose child is behaving very badly, because they turn the light on the child so that it should see, it doesn't mean that this is because they're hostile to it. On the contrary it's because they love the child that they do this. It is the same with Conscience. The child doesn't want its parents to know, it wants to hide what it's done from

them. It tells lies, it does various things to conceal but this is all foolish because it's not going to stop its parents from loving it. Do you understand? But it can't help itself. It has to do this. It's the same way between us and our conscience. When this really happens, when we see clearly and we look at people and see through the mask of their personality, what they want to present to us, and we see them without their mask as we see ourselves without our mask, then we come to realize one most necessary thing and that is that we're all in the same boat. As long as we feel we're different from other people, that we're in this state of confusion and blindness, whether we think we're better than they are or worse than they are, it is blindness, we're not better nor worse than other people, we are one. This is what Conscience can do to us, it can bring us on that way towards realizing that we're not separate from other people by showing us what is behind the mask; that it is the mask that separates. Yes that's very good, what you said.

Student: I guess there's only one thing I discovered about Conscience which was that I didn't really know what it is. I found out a lot of what it isn't and how it didn't operating through the pressures of what it is, of trying to act as I think other people would want me to act either because of that's the way I've been trained by society and by wanting people to like me, and I guess you have to know first what it isn't before you can find out what it is.

J.G.B: No that's a fancy idea. What you say is true, that this environment acts as a kind of pseudo-conscience. It acts like conscience because it uses the same thing, that is, of seeing us. The power of Conscience is in its seeing. It is not given authority to do because as I say, as I described it as a visitor to the house. The visitor is not entitled to give orders in the house; it is his presence that changes things but if we don't know that he's present or if we don't recognize him for what he is then even his presence changes nothing. That is how it ordinarily is. But we turn things upside down and instead of living by this inner seeing we live by outer seeing.

(Why do you come in late? What? Why should you come in at all if you come in late? Why is this? You have no feeling for what we do here. What? You can't have much if you come in 25 minutes late or possibly longer. You just don't care, that's the truth. If you cared you'd come in time.)

A very strange thing also is where you realize that the way that the society acts on you isn't through authority, it's not through its laws, and through its power to reward or punish you; it is simply by seeing.

We find ourselves behaving in front of people and society, as you say, yes, it is the desire to please them, but it is a peculiar thing this; it's what they see that matters. Very often people are really at a loss to understand how it is that their behaviour changes as soon as some people look at them. They can do things when they're not seen that they would never do if they are seen. They ask themselves 'How does it come about that I am so stupid?' It is necessary here to understand this peculiar power that comes from seeing. In that sense what you say about the substitute conscience teaching us something may be true. But if you realize this, if you had realized this that this false conscience which is not at all rightly called a social conscience because it's not social at all, this is illustrated in Gurdjieff's explanation of the compassionate idiot—you know the compassionate idiot? —the antipathic compassionate idiot, who only manifests compassion if there's somebody or other who's watching him, otherwise it's the opposite. This has nothing to do with social conscience. This peculiar thing about us, that our behaviour is influenced by whether people see us or not, this must be very thoroughly understood and we ought really thoroughly to understand that this is turning things upside down. We don't mind what our

conscience sees inside, even quite disgusting things, but we mind terribly if some other people see quite trivial things.

You said about, when I said it's fancy to think that you have to approach it from the outside because as Massimo and Virginia said, both of them valid were, what they spoke about was really about Conscience. We do want to try to understand it better because we have so many buffers, so many ways of self-calming in us which we can avoid the action of Conscience on us that we need to really understand it thoroughly so that there's no longer, we're no longer able to deceive ourselves when this light is turned on us.

Student: I don't know how well this ties in with what you were just talking about.

J.G.B.: What was that?

Student: I don't know how this really ties in with that....

J.G.B.: Well that doesn't matter; it's much better if it doesn't. Everything that's been said must be put aside entirely. You must say what you've seen without any reference to what I've said or anyone else has said.

Student: Well I'm thinking in particular of a night that I shared a bottle of whisky with some friends and after it had been about half drunk I got the sudden impulse to go down to the kitchen and make some cinnamon toast. And I did that, and as I was doing it, I was thinking "Well, the theme this week is Conscience" and I could see myself doing it if there wasn't anyone else around but here I am making a whole batch of it to take up to some people, and how I could look at that and see it and say "Well there's something not right there" because it's like I had no conscience at all and there must be something in this, something that I could use as a strength but somehow it seems really distorted that that could happen and I couldn't feel anything at all except will "Don't do it!" really.

J.G.B.: That's a good report. The question does come and has to be looked at but it comes from John's report. How is it that we can have, we can see ourselves doing things but this seeing doesn't change anything? I said that Conscience is like a visitor, it can't give orders in the house. First of all, what he said illustrates just exactly what I mean by this and seeing this is really the key to understanding the working of Conscience. Conscience is not given the power to use force; egoism is given the power to use force. In the struggle between Conscience and egoism it is really the struggle between light and darkness, only the weapons that are allowed in the two cases are little different. The weapon of Conscience is light; the weapon of Egoism is darkness. This state which everyone undoubtedly can recognize, what John has just described, is something every one of us has done, even every one of us has done this very week—or if you haven't you simply haven't observed yourself.

J.G.B.: Once this begins to happen, that we're beginning to see in this way, then the egoism is in danger, sooner or later the light will become too much for it. Conscience can't turn the light on our own egoism, we can't see our own egoism, what we see is its manifestations and particularly we see its manifestations in our personality. Our egoism remains safely in its own darkness.

I've been talking to several people in the last few days and one or two of them have said to me 'But how is it that we haven't changed? How is that we've been trying, I've tried and we're all the same as ever?' Given the chance we all behave just as badly as we ever did, what's the good of it all?' Somebody said this to me. The conquest of egoism is a very great thing. In this Great Prayer of ours, this comes at the third stage, it comes after very great transformations, after the initiative has passed from the personality to the essence and you become a real being still this egoism remains but little by little as I said the light becomes too strong for it and at last you're forced down on your knees and the egoism goes out of you. It's very good to see and hold onto this kind of thing that John has just described. You can realize quite well that you wouldn't have been at all pleased if I'd walked into the kitchen when you were making this bread, even supposing that I hadn't observed it, I was occupied with something else and thought you were doing some very high thing such as nobly making bread for breakfast like some people did last night because all the bread was eaten by the fasters.

I say that because it is really important that we should understand the power of seeing, and understand what is the profound meaning of talking of the powers of darkness and the powers of light.

Student: The theme hasn't been a way for me (inaudible) this week and from the exercise (inaudible) went through paying particular attention to it but it's been rather peculiar I think even more so than earlier in the course (inaudible) but as far as Conscience, outside of the meditation, it came up something about— there were various pictures that came to mind of well Conscience or not Conscience, you know, just sort of drifting around on it, but I seemed to have really, like reinforced the ego or this just not caring (inaudible) and I was just able to hide it on my own terms. I mean, I'll act certain ways and maybe there is some Conscience showing but I mean I've already translated it in such a way that it doesn't come up anymore. There are things I do and I have long talks and arguments with myself about but they don't seem to... Conscience doesn't come out in it. It seems just to be a hypothetical discussion. I think that I have always quite well protected my ego before but I think since the Course I've even evolved a far better technique for that.

J.G.B: It is in talks with oneself, very often of finding fault with oneself; reproaching oneself. It's quite true they are also really one of the means of self-calming.

Student Debbie: It seems like whenever I see you, if you look at me I immediately flash and see myself, see what kind of state I'm in. I walked into this room a little bit late and you looked at me and I immediately flashed on what kind of state I was in, which was completely empty, unaware and after I realized this I'd walked in late, in the middle when Massimo was speaking I felt really bad because I felt he was really giving, saying something really important to him, something really, really true and I just felt disgusted with myself for just coming in and all these other people coming in, it made me angry because it just showed how inconsiderate we are, insensitive.

J.G.B: I don't know if you remember Gurdjieff's comparing Man to a house full of servants. Did you go through that with them, Pierre? However it may be, we have, first of all, this idea that we have many 'I's and each of them have different impulses and they are constantly changing, that there is none of them fitted to be or destined to be the Master of the House, their very nature is that they can't, they all in other ways can be said to be the different elements or facets of our personality. There is a Master, but the Master is away; the Master can't come into the house while it's in this state of disorder. If he sees that this house has an intention of getting into order then he may do something about it, and how does this come? When some of the servants begin to find the

disorder intolerable, they make one of them into the temporary or deputy steward to act as if he had the authority of the Master behind him. With the help of others, he does a certain amount of work to bring the house into order. This corresponds to what I was saying about Conscience, that Conscience can't work in us until something has already been prepared. But when it has, then the Master sends the real Steward, who is not from the servants but from the Master, not from the conditioned but from the unconditioned, as we've been putting it, from beyond the veil or conditioning. That Steward is Conscience. He is come into the house and he is there, and if he is recognized he is very much honored because he is sent by the Master. But this Deputy Steward is not always inside us; there can sometimes be, outside of us, a someone who helps to get things into order. I can play a useful role for you in this; it is in that way. I cannot be Conscience, I am not your Master's representative; your Master's representative is within you. But I can be like one of the other servants who knows that the one thing that matters is that you should have your own Master's representative, or your own Conscience in you.

Therefore it can happen as Debbie says that I can help you to have this moment of seeing, it doesn't mean any more than that.

It's very important to recognize that the, that Conscience in us does produce in us all this same kind of feeling of embarrassment at being seen to be behaving in an unseemly way. If I speak to you and find fault with you like I did with Arthur, and somebody else whose name I forget who came in late this is not the same thing because this only produces a reaction and they either become angry or something like that with me. But if I can see that people don't see themselves and there isn't an inner light in them, then it is sometimes a duty to draw attention.

But it is a very poor substitute. In the long run the only thing that will get us right is Conscience; not anyone outside of us; nothing else; no person can ever make this inner light for us where this uncompromising seeing takes place. When this really takes, when you really go through the time when Conscience is awakened then it is really a very agonizing experience. If it comes over you for a long time when you really do see yourself and can't help seeing yourself then you will never be the same again.

Student: You asked us to take a quiet time I think, and at that time the feeling came through that Conscience to me was the oneness, and everyone. And then I don't know whether because of the theme or because of the hourly stops, this week I couldn't stop working, trying to stay in one moment. And then today it all gave way. This has happened a number of times but it actually happened almost physically in the morning exercise and the first thing that happened was a grey veil seemed to appear and then it just collapsed on me, and after that the whole day was gone.

J.G.B.: Which do you think is more profitable? The first five days or today?

Student: There's no question.

J.G.B: It is so. Fullness is emptiness and emptiness is fullness. Being able to do produces nothing; to be powerless to do can produce everything. Then something else has a chance. You always have to remember this—that Conscience is not the Master; Conscience is the one who goes before the Face of the Lord to prepare His Ways. It is all represented in the Gospels where St. John the Baptist represents

Conscience and Jesus represents the Master. You see we speak really; when we speak in the Sufi language, we speak about Fana and Baka which are death and resurrection; emptying and filling. When everything collapses in us and we become aware of emptiness, something in us also is aware that this emptiness is necessary. There are times when one has one without the other. This is where one needs a friend; one needs someone who has been through this and knows. I know when this has happened with people, where they have become really aware of emptiness without being able to see for themselves that this emptiness is the necessary opening that allows the other to enter. It's easy enough to talk about this from the outside, but when one is in that state it is not at all so easy because one doesn't know how to distinguish between emptiness and darkness. It is at this point that Conscience really becomes our friend. Until then it seems Conscience is, if not an enemy, at any rate a stern admonisher whose presence just makes us suffer. But when we become empty then we see the other side of it. We see that, really, Conscience is giving us the guarantee that there is someone behind; that something will come. This is why I repeated the story of the servants and the Steward. When the Steward is there and you recognize him for what he is then there is a guarantee that the Master will come.

That is what made me smile, because a silly thing came into my mind, we don't recognize the Steward for what he is then we're "Waiting for Godot"! That's a wonderful play.

Student: I went to Oxford on Wednesday and I thought I would just go in—I had a doctor's appointment—go in, go to the doctor's appointment and hitch-hike right back. It was really getting to be late around 12.30 or I felt like I should go back but I knew that a bunch of other people were going to meet at a restaurant and so I decided, well, I'll go and I'll get a ride right back with them, and we were sitting in the restaurant for two hours. It was very nice but you know, it was very comfortable but I had this feeling that, well what it was, I felt I had to come back and work on the cook-book, because, it was like there was a hole a space that I should have been in, and I was being pulled towards that, that I just couldn't be in the moment of being with my friends in this restaurant. I was not really there because I was here and this was where I should have been. As soon as I came back and I took everything out onto the lawn and started working. It all settled down again and then I could be there, just at that time. I don't know if this was that kind of Conscience.

J.G.B.: It's just 10 o'clock, we can stop for a minute. Before we stop just let me speak about this. It's a very interesting report for understanding about time, understanding about how there are different lives, that we can be aware that we are in the wrong life, but that is only a little loop. You just go out of it and get back into it again. But, it is certainly true that one of things that Conscience does for us is to show us which life we should be living, because there are different lives. There are lives that are not; that keep us in this mechanical world. I have spoken about that I think. We must have had talks about time and eternity? About this? All right. It was an interesting thing from that point of view because in fact you are in two places at once but one of them is a ghost place and the other a real, the place where you actually are. Real is not the right word. It is. You are actually sitting in the restaurant but your ghost is doing the cook-book and you feel this awkwardness of being separated from your own ghost. Then you come back. Your ghost gets in again and you feel comfortable but this is perhaps not quite so easy to understand.

Anyhow now let's do our ten o'clock duty and then we can go and drink some nice hot drinks.

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I'm very glad you have taken this hourly stop to heart because if we can keep it up for some time it will have a very strong effect for all of us, and will enable the benefits of our being here to be very, very much greater.

FURTHER DISCUSSION: THEME - CONSCIENCE

Monday 3rd. June, 1974

Student: It's about a situation which might appear in the future. On Friday night we had a visitor who came and slept in room 9, and on Saturday morning he got up with the bell and started talking with me, and this went on and on till 7.15 where I had a real hesitation as to whether to carry on and let him talk or go to the morning exercise. And I stayed with him until 8 o'clock when there was breakfast because he wasn't to go to the morning exercise.

J.G.B.: Why not?

S: He had no intention because I think Pierre had told him the previous day not to go to that.

J.G.B.: Is that so? I'm very surprised. Any visitor can come to the morning exercise and you should have told him.

S: But in that situation...

J.G.B.: The great thing is not to talk. You couldn't have done anything worse than to talk for three quarters of an hour. This must be bad to let somebody talk. If people talk they only harm themselves, especially if they talk for that sort of length of time. It can only come from egoism. Nobody can talk for three quarters of an hour for anything but to satisfy their egoism. However much it may seem that they ask to talk about serious things, it is not. I'm glad you mention this because it is necessary to remind you about that. These kind of heart to heart talks where people talk about their troubles to one another are very harmful, both for the person who talks and the person who listens. The person who listens thinks he's doing good, thinks he's being helpful or she is being helpful. More harm is done by this than by almost anything. By talking people are prevented from seeing things. You must see, you must realize for yourself. How can someone talk and at the same time be seeing? It is enormously difficult and no one can do it for three quarters of an hour or half an hour. There are so many people who have this idea that they're doing some good by listening to people talking; it is not true. For a quarter of an hour, yes, but not for three quarters of an hour. Supposing that someone is in a bad way and real trouble, that means if they're in real trouble, something can be happening to them, something can change in them. If they can talk they avoid the whole thing, they miss their opportunity. You should see for yourself that this is a really harmful thing, this man missed the chance of coming to the morning exercise. He's after all been in a group for four years, therefore there's no problem for him to come to it. I'm wondering whether to tell something or not, perhaps...

Yes?

Student: Something I saw in meditation last week and it happened without words and since then I've really covered it up. Something about there being no reason to be critical of others and the words that came then were 'Turn the other cheek' and that people are really beautiful, but it was so perfectly clear and logical and since then I've lost some understanding that I had.

J.G.B: We are able to store in our heads only the dregs of our experience. If you see something, you can't keep what you see with its freshness and quality because this mental memory is not designed for that. Our mental memory is designed for dealing with the material world it doesn't matter for that that it sheds the life of what we see. But that doesn't mean that what we see is lost, only it doesn't go into the head. By head here I mean what is called the Formatory Apparatus; this thing which registers and constantly recombines and associates and so on, it is necessary for dealing with this world. But when you really begin to see it, you wish you had some good way of putting it away and not having to live with that and being able to live with another part of yourself.

Yes it is true, you saw this. But this doesn't mean that one must not be able to look at people with open eyes and see how things really are with them. Only when you look at people in this way you will always see that you are also looking at yourself. When you look at people and see their faults and see yourself at the same time, it is a different thing. It is in a different place. When you separate yourself from people that is when this kind of criticism which is unnecessary can enter. For example when I was talking to Richard just now about the harmfulness of talking, I was very aware of how much of this kind of harm I myself do. So if I was criticizing him I was at the same time criticizing myself.

Student: For the hourly stops I was looking at the latifas, and first of all I wondered if that's all right to do and it seemed to me that maybe to work just for a latifa I was down on might be helpful and the developing of conscience. Would you say something about that?

J.G.B: It's artificial. Why is this artificial? Because you're bringing cause and effect into a region where it doesn't work. You see if I work on the latifa "Obey" it is perfectly true this is associated with conscience. You say, if I work on this, will this help conscience to develop? And it sounds very sensible, but it misses that point which is difficult for people to grasp because they expect to see result arising from causes in this spiritual life, but it doesn't work in that way. It is not connected. You know we spoke about this causality, when we were talking last week, that causality is the lowest of all the forces that work in the world. You see, you asked me your first question, is it useful to take the latifas or take the zikr at the hourly stop?' I said to look; to spend this time when you stop here in looking, look at what has happened in the previous hour, look forward to the next hour. I didn't say do any kind of exercise. It's much easier to do something of that kind. Looking is much harder. Always try to remember this. In the spiritual world it is the unpredictable, the expected that happens. It is the realm of freedom. It is spontaneity. If you try to import into it cause and effect doing things in order to get some result, you're keeping yourself from that world.

Why do you think it's so constantly said in the Bhagavad Gita "act without looking to the fruits of action"? Why is it always taught "Never look for results, never expect"? Because as soon as you expect, you close the door to the spiritual world. You put yourself under the very laws that you're wanting to escape from.

This doesn't mean of course that you must do nothing. What it means is that you must do your part but count and trust that the Work will do its part and give the result that corresponds to your need which you can't know.

A very good prayer: 'Those things which for our unworthiness we dare not and for our blindness we cannot ask, vouch safe to give us'. This is a very good prayer, and those prayers were made by people in Cappadocia who had a deep understanding, very early on. It was an extraordinary group of men.

Student: Last exeat I was using a sewing machine. I dropped a pin on the floor and as I—the actual process I observed—I looked down at it and I said "It's too small to bother with" and I just caught myself at that moment and saw... and then I picked it up and I saw that that tiny little thing, these tiny things we put aside and excuse ourselves, that they're just as important as the very big things.

J.G.B.: It is so. It is in this way that we make the reins by which the driver is able to control the horses. At that moment there is no emotional state. What you saw then was right, that to do this, to make this small action was necessary, and as necessary as to do a big one. And what was right about it is that there was no because. Right is right it has no because. Because, because...

Student: Would you speak about Remorse of Conscience and about guilt?

J.G.B.: I never like talking at large on general topics. It wouldn't be a bad thing if we all stopped for a minute to have our own examples in our mind. I've just had a good look at mine.

Student Charlie C: This last exeat simply amounts to the fact that it was a fairly golden opportunity to get those practical things done for this painting exhibition of mine which began on the Friday. And I found myself in Oxford having completed the various necessary chores I'd gone there to do spending the afternoon taking various people for a punt ride and to watch the boat races that were going on and that seemed to me almost legitimate from the point of view of unwinding and doing various other things, but afterwards walking back this very clear sensation or feeling about there being an interval and I found myself suggesting to the people I was with that we might go and see a film. And as soon as I said that I knew that was the last thing I wanted to do. It worked out that out of a party of five, three people didn't want to go and see a film. We went to see a film and I found myself by the end of that film in a state of acute remorse or guilt because I realized that I'd blown half the opportunity of the exeat in Oxford whereas I thought originally I should have been able to start off something of it. And the fact that also I had to scratch a newly painted car to park in order to go and see the film and lose all the cash in order to pay for the film seemed to me it was rather a telling point which in retrospect probably confuses the issue. It was extremely vivid at the time but there was a point before the film I could have salvaged something of my original intention for the day and what picture I had of the day could have been recovered and I lost that.

J.G.B.: The question that I always ask is: was I supposed to distinguish between remorse of conscience which is positive, and guilt which is negative. I think that when remorse turns into self-pity or considering that is, when it is either an inward state where one goes on worrying at oneself, or when it is an outward state where one feels exposed to people because of something one has done or some mode of behaviour that one is aware of. I think that all that is when it becomes the useless and harmful guilt. To brood, to worry and to pity oneself and to need to justify oneself or to be comforted by other people—all kinds of things of that kind are marks of this negative guilt. But the mark of remorse of

conscience, I think is its timelessness. It's a moment of seeing that is not negative at all because it is more like a gift: it is something one has received. And certainly, there is something particularly valuable in helping one to be detached from oneself in this experience; of doing something, which one doesn't want to do, to which one has committed oneself just by a moment of loss of contact with one's intelligence or one's understanding. The situation which Charlie has described, this is really, I know how much I have learnt from this, seeing myself doing something absurd, useless, that I don't want to do, but I've let myself be drawn into it, and then wake up and have to live through it. It may be more profitable to have gone through that than to have had a virtuous day.

S: I have one question to ask about that, because by the end of the movie I was in some kind of state which I've been in very seldom, and it wasn't just that I saw that here was an opportunity which I'd lost now and forever, it would always be on whatever record is kept, but I completely flipped out actually. I became extremely violent and I feel sorry for the poor people who had to travel back with me but I don't often lose control as much as I did then.

J.G. Bennett Foundation