



The Case of P. D. Ouspensky

Marie Seton

Seton, a Russian translator, was Ouspensky's secretary and confidante during the 1940s. Although convinced of his goodness and honesty, she writes pointedly about the corrupting influence of being a guru.

J. W. D.

It is twenty years now since the things I am going to write about happened. They have not been written before and seldom discussed. There was no reason and I felt no desire to expose a person while alive for an inward failure. Who was I to set myself up as a revealing judge? But I did learn a lesson as to what could overcome a guru.

This is written now because the case of P. D. Ouspensky is not an isolated one. It is a situation that may be typical of a man whose fate is to become a successful guru and, then through the force of outside circumstances, find himself unable to cope with his own reactions and hence, for a time at least, lose his way. I have been told, though I do not know it first hand, that during the last year of Ouspensky's life, he found his way back to control of himself. I hope this is true because by nature Ouspensky was essentially a good man and not a dishonest one.

The case of Ouspensky has, perhaps, a special meaning for India since India has swamis and gurus of every kind, male and female. For many people—Indian and foreign—India is the fountain of ancient or Eastern Wisdom. It is a paradise for those who seek to be gurus, and those who want to find a guru to direct and lead them. The point is, perhaps, that here and there exist true gurus. But as the Tantras recognize, true adepts in spiritual understanding are very rare.

To a lesser degree the West is also prone to what can only be called 'guruism.' By no means is all of this search on the level of the Billy Graham kind of evangelism—a popular appeal to the sentimental religiosity of the under educated, or unhappy individuals whose empty lives cry out to be called back to the fold of God whom they ignored while they were reasonably happy. A sense of having strayed, or a feeling of emptiness envelopes such people and they imagine they are being granted a revelation. In such a state any God-image will do. Only God give me something to hold onto! But Gods rarely make their appearance by themselves. Usually they require to be introduced by a guru, one that is within the frame of a particular orthodoxy, or one of those non-conformist fellows, or ladies, who puts in a dramatic magnetic appearance.

The need to find a guru is not restricted to the ill-informed, the romantic, or those with a secretly bubbling well of potential hysteria or delusion. The need is also often lurking in people who in intellect are far above the average. At least three distinguished writers in the English language—T. S. Eliot, Graham Greene, and the clever, if acid, Evelyn Waugh,—found the answer to their spiritual search in orthodox Christian religious faith. And the faith—the act of faith—is identical whether it is devotion to Brahma, Jehovah or Allah.

Then there are intellectuals like Christopher Isherwood, W. H. Auden, Gerald Heard and, the most famous of this group—Aldous Huxley—all four once ardent rationalists with two of them having once shown a left-wing bent. Suddenly they tipped over to one or another form of mysticism as a way out for some sense of frustration. Huxley now writes articles about the marvelous visions he enjoys as a result of experimenting with certain drugs. One wonders whether this is a very morally responsible thing to be advertising to the world as a way to find ecstasy.

Huxley commenced his search for 'The Perennial Philosophy' in the mid-1930's by trying to find the answer for himself in the Know Thyself philosophy and method of Peter D. Ouspensky. Huxley soon went on elsewhere; but that was not Ouspensky's fault.

At that time in London, Ouspensky was the most likely guru—though he never called himself that—to make an appeal to the educated, reasonably intelligent person who had no place within orthodox religion, nor any special inclination to be. The sort

of people who were interested in Ouspensky's ideas were those who had some interest in the idea of self-knowledge and were seeking a philosophy to live by which was not orthodox materialism. Ouspensky mainly appealed to the rational person who questioned whether it might not be true, as said by Hamlet, that 'there are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamed of in our philosophy.'

Ouspensky, a Russian émigré, who looked infinitely more like a doctor, or science professor, than any conventional image of a mystic, had a far-reaching intellect and an interestingly creative mind. He was someone alive and provocative. Hence his capacity to attract men like the prolific doctor-writer, Kenneth Walker. Ouspensky had the added attraction of sophisticated culture with not a vestige of fakir eccentricity. He was a sensible guru if ever there was one. And extremely well dressed as a middle-aged man verging on sixty.

P. D. Ouspensky made an impressive figure calmly sitting, presiding at his lectures, which were read for him. Today more than fifteen years after his death quite a lot is being written about him in Europe, especially in England.

My attempt to take a relatively short period—a little less than six years altogether of his fairly long life—is not to discredit Ouspensky, and particularly not to discredit his writings. But rather to induce people who are uncritical of themselves in relation to gurus to see that they themselves can unconsciously contribute to their beloved guru slipping, let us say, from 'grace.' Hero-worship is not necessarily respect. It can become slavish dependence which ends with an overwhelming temptation to the guru to lose all respect for those who have made themselves his disciples. It should be remembered that since man is not super-human, it is only too easy for the well-intentioned person to either develop delusions of grandeur, or become a dictator provided they are surrounded for long enough by people who say 'yes, yes' to them and their ideas irrespective as to whether or not their own conduct merits such awe. The political dictator has been the scourge of modern times as well as ancient. The rise of such dictators, frequently believing themselves to be their nation's saviour, and their entrenchment, is aided by uncritical passivity and adulation, the very thing that devotees of gurus are most prone to.

If the guru ends in exploiting his disciples, they themselves have contributed to the distortion of his power.

II

The Ouspensky group, or school, in the 1930's was esoteric. There was considerable secrecy maintained. Nobody could just be brought along to Mr. Ouspensky's lectures

in a casual way. A person had to be introduced by someone who, rightly or wrongly, had gained the impression through their own knowledge of 'the System' that such and such a person had what was termed 'a magnetic centre.' This was an element of personality which made this person suitable for the Ouspensky method of Self-Knowledge and Self Development.

I can only say what it was in my case which caused someone I met to conclude I had such a magnetic centre: the person—an artist—who introduced me into the group observed almost at the moment of our first meeting that I had certain poses—this was quite true—but when criticised in regard to those poses I did not reject the criticism out of hand. I was responsive because I wanted to know myself better. I was receptive. Presumably, all the people who came to the group were receptive in different ways.

When a person with the so-called magnetic centre was discovered, the discoverer then consulted with Mr. Ouspensky either directly or through one of his secretaries, both of them Russians, as to whether so and so could be invited to the lectures. Both the secretaries as I knew them—one a woman, the other a highly cultured man—were nice people.

The initial intention of this careful selection on the basis of psychological potential was no doubt very valid so long as the head of the group—and this applies to any group—was in a responsible state of mind. The reason given was that if unsuitable people came they would go out and misrepresent 'the System' which had come to Ouspensky from the famous Gurgieff [sic. Gurdjieff]—thought by some to be infamous—to whom, for example, the well known writer, Katherine Mansfield, had gone not very long before her death.

The danger in this reasoning about misrepresentation was that if something really went wrong—out of gear—within 'the System,' reasonable criticism and questioning could be shunted aside on the grounds that the would-be student and not 'the System' was at fault in understanding. I do not know if this ever actually happened in the earlier phases of Ouspensky's work. I do not know what doubts there may have been in the minds of other people at the time I am going to speak of because I did not discuss my own observations, questions and reactions with anyone except P. D. Ouspensky himself. But if there is excessive secrecy, it is a pitfall to trap the unwary—both the guru, who is protected by it, and the disciple who can be exploited through it.

Madam Ouspensky, a very extraordinary woman older than her husband, had met the Gurgieff system in Russia before her marriage to Ouspensky, and before the Revolution of 1917. It was Madam—then either a widow or divorced—with half grown children, indeed, almost grown, who had followed the writings of Ouspensky who had been attracted for a number of years to philosophic speculation and mysticism. He had traveled far to investigate some of his interesting speculative ideas about the knowledge

to be discovered through understanding of certain buildings and works of art. He had visited the Taj Mahal, about which he had some very interesting thoughts, and he had been to Ceylon where one particular Buddha greatly impressed him.

He had expressed some fascinating ideas in his writings published in Russia. Before he came under the influence of Gurgieff he had written the book *Tertium Organum*, which was the book which enticed Gurgieff to desire Ouspensky as a collaborator. Subsequently, there appeared the impressive book of daring speculations, impressions and experience—*The [A] New Model of the Universe*.

But 'the System' was something in practice outside of Ouspensky's writings, and 'the System' was divided into the theoretical with which P. D. Ouspensky was concerned, and the practical application which was Madam's province. It is not possible to detail the whole theory, nor even the whole practice. But the intention of this System was that it should be a way towards the unity of personality through self-awareness. It was to be applicable to people living in the world. It was not the religious way of the monk, nor the way of the fakir's austerity, nor yet the way of the yogi's contemplation.

The main thesis was that people live in a state of 'sleep,' but think themselves aware and awake and master of themselves when they only react to outside stimulation—to what other people think of them—or what in Ouspensky's terminology was called 'considering.' It can hardly be denied that almost everyone is cluttered up with what can be called 'false personalities.'

But, according to Ouspensky, people with 'magnetic centres'—that is, the potential to become aware and, perhaps, reach a unified and transformed state of being—have within them a Higher Intellectual Centre and a Higher Emotional Centre, the latter being more important for man's self-development than the former. There was much additional theory of potential chemical change in response to psychological change through the pursuit of becoming 'awake' and overcoming the mechanical aspect of most behaviour.

I met this system of thought and it greatly appealed to me on account of its reasonableness. I was not of a religious turn of mind, nor one who had a drive to pursue mystical experience by artificial means. I thought there was a great difference in levels of consciousness between those moments when any person was in the grip of 'negative emotions' and at any moment of detachment; or between the moment of ordinary consciousness and that of the creative moment. It seemed to me quite true that I, and indeed everybody else, was subject to the domination at times of 'false personalities.' I am quite sure that the Ouspensky system was of concrete use to me, and that his own loss of way for a period was not from an inherent flaw in the theory of the system.

First I attended the lectures only.

In due course, I was allowed to pass from theory to practice. Practice at becoming aware of one's thoughts, actions, mannerisms, feelings—of oneself—the false and 'asleep' versus what might be one's state if one was more and more 'awake.' Special conditions of physical work and the planning of it—gardening, housework, cooking—were organised in a country house where the Ouspenskys lived. This work was conducted under the eagle eye of Madam.

A cruel critic of Madam might say she was a dominating woman who enacting role of a guru, consciously or unconsciously, lived in very comfortable circumstances with all her housework done on a grand scale by mostly sincere men and women who were under the spell of her magnetic and mystic personality. I don't know whether she was genuine or a charlatan; or whether she was simply a commanding type of neurotic. It is immaterial. I never really knew her well enough to be able to judge. I never fell under her spell. But I think she had great power over people whose imagination was captured by her.

I am sure I learned a good deal about my own mechanism from what she sometimes had me do by way of 'work.' Probably anyone could have learned something useful provided they were more interested in the work of self-knowledge itself than in the commanding personality of Madam.

One 'test' has always remained in my mind and it can symbolise the sort of controlled conditions in which anyone could observe something about themselves if they had a mind to: I had always liked my hands and I supposed I could dislike nothing more than picking fish to pieces to feed the cats. Not at all in my line! One day, I got the thoroughly unpleasant job of taking apart fish heads for the cats' lunch. I observed myself at this nasty job. The truth was that a superficial vanity and not genuine repulsion had me think my hands (and myself) too good to do any such thing. Inside, I noticed I remained *unmoved* while de-boning the heads with my fingers. Through Madam's choice of a job for me, I saw I could quite well do a very nasty messy job and not really hate it at all.

This had a kind of liberating effect so that I felt at the time, and still feel, that I benefited from the Ouspensky system. But I never lived in the house for any protracted period—some people did—and so I never became dependent upon Madam in order to feel myself 'awake.' There is no doubt that Madam exerted a tremendous influence upon the minds of the people who chose to live constantly within her shadow.

III

I was absolutely nobody in 'the System' in England from 1936 to 1938. But for the fact that I was a writer who at one moment was involved in collaborating on a translation from Russian into English of Chekov's play *The Cherry Orchard*, and another piece of writing, I might never have come into contact with Mr. Ouspensky outside of the lectures and at the country house. But I did. He asked me to go and see him privately in a house in London, and he read the Chekov translation.

In consequence, he knew something of me, and I of him outside of the framework of the guru-disciple relationship. He was, I think, nearing sixty and I was twenty-six. I knew his homeland—Russia—from which he had exiled himself. He liked me and I liked him. But he did not become enamoured of me, nor I enamoured of him. This was never a factor in our relationship. What happened was that a friendliness developed, principally, I think, because I was not afraid of him, and perhaps there was an attraction in having a 'system' person who wanted to learn without being exactly of the foot-touching devotee type. I greatly respected P. D. Ouspensky and I was very willing to learn from him. And I honestly believed I had learned.

I do not think that anyone was ever kinder to me, nor that anyone ever respected me as a person more than P. D. Ouspensky. What happened later never affected my regard for him as a human being. I do not think I was even disillusioned because of an acceptance that men, even saints, have feet of clay. I will always be grateful to Ouspensky for what I believe I learned from his system.

*But...*well, my one experience with a guru who lost his way has made me sceptical of the wisdom of any man thinking himself fit to be a guru.

I feel quite sure that when P. D. Ouspensky committed himself to follow Gurgieff and married Madam, and left Russia during the Revolution because it boded ill for the pursuit of what he believed in, he was sincere. He was no less sincere, I think, when he broke away from Gurgieff in Paris because, as he told me: "Gurgieff had gone off the rails—become mad—and I wanted to save the system."

Perhaps, indeed probably, Ouspensky remained in possession of himself throughout his period in England. I was in no position to judge. I don't know. But in the autumn of 1940 he and Madam, as well as about half a dozen American members of the System and a couple of English ones arrived in New York, where there was a wealthy young couple, students of the Ouspenskys, who paid the major bills.

I, who had been only on the very periphery in England, had gone to America to do a job and was caught there by the outbreak of war. By chance I ran into one of the members and learned that P. D. Ouspensky and his wife had arrived: that already a rather large country house in New Jersey had been obtained for practical work and a studio apartment in an expensive area of New York was being negotiated for.

Because I believed I had gained much from the Ouspensky system, I was very glad they had come. Within a few days I was astounded that he should ask me to act as his secretary to do the arrangements for lectures and look after his living conditions for the days each week he would spend in New York. Why me? When all the people, save the young couple, were much older members of the System than I was. The only reasonable answer to this question was that I was the only person among those who were available to Ouspensky who had ever been in Russia. And P. D. Ouspensky for the second time in his life was now an uprooted man.

This sudden promotion, as it were, did not prevent me from carrying on my own outside work. Perhaps if I had not had a life outside of the System, I would not be writing this today. For some months I greatly enjoyed the work because I had no doubt at all that Ouspensky's particular system was one of great help to anyone who wished to gain insight into themselves for the purpose of living in the world and being able to cope with the problems of living. I thought it was a means of establishing a fair amount of equilibrium though I did not notice any appreciable expansion of my consciousness. I can only claim that it made me moderately observant of my own reactions and gave me some sense of independence in decision. It did not lead me to mystical experience, real or imagined.

I cannot say there was an exact day when it struck me that P. D. Ouspensky was strangely extravagant considering that the young couple were paying the bulk of the bills. But he would direct me to buy the most lavishly expensive fruit, cheese and delicacies for his personal consumption. I wondered was I a puritan to think this a curious indulgence. It was not that eating and self-awareness were in conflict. But did a person choose the most expensive things when someone else was paying the bill?

One day I noticed that the people who actually paid the bills were not asked to share these expensive foods. But sometimes I had a goodly share of them. I was very appreciative of the good things of this world whether in food, or clothes, or the decorations of a house. I liked luxury and comfort and never held that a hair shirt was the slightest guarantee of spirituality in and of itself. It could too well be exhibitionism. But I did not think, or rather feel for myself, that I had any desire to be a slave to the need for luxury as a sign of anything at all.

When I went to the country house for practical work, I began to notice what I had not noticed in England: that the people who were the 'old members' and had been

long under Madam's discipline were drab in clothes, joyless, and strangely close-up people one with another. All were fearful of her displeasure. They were no less in awe of Mr. Ouspensky, though sometimes he seemed to extend a certain kindness towards them. I began to wonder why the pursuit of self-knowledge had to, as it seemed, eliminate an atmosphere of warmth between people and something that might be described as a lack of lovingness.

Again, I cannot pin down the day when I began to speculate about the inner state of P. D. Ouspensky. Increasingly after a lecture he would ask a few of the group, including the young couple and myself, to go out with him to supper at a not very distant restaurant. At first, these suppers seemed to me very pleasant. He would order drinks and something to eat and time would pass. Every evening there was a lecture the party—for that is what it was—would break up later and later. The young couple usually, if not always, paid the bill.

Ouspensky was often sharp with them and they took this, as others did to whom he was no less sharp, as a 'test' to 'awake' them up to self-awareness. *But to me he was not sharp or sarcastic though I was well aware that I was no outstanding example of self-awareness.* I deserved just as much 'ticking off' as anyone did.

The only difference between the people Ouspensky increasingly 'ticked off,' and ever more harshly, and me, was that while I respected him I was not in awe of him. They lived to gain his approval and the more they hoped for it the less they got it. Sometimes he became furiously angry, particularly with the young couple who paid the bills.

The next stage, if you can call it that, was that Ouspensky began to show a greater disinclination to leave the restaurant where we would all go. The others would leave and he would ask me to stay on. With the others gone he would have another drink and another and yet another, though he never became drunk; or at least, did not show it. One, two, three, four in the morning and still he would urge me to stay longer. And hour after hour he would talk—extremely interestingly—about his homeland which I could discuss with him; about his life, *but it was always about things before he ever met the system of Gurgiëff.*

He did not talk to me night after night because he had become enamoured of me, but because his assumption of the role of guru had cut him off from the normal avenues of friendship because, unfortunately, people who become devotees do not bring with them a sense that human beings, even if they are the most enlightened, are also human enough at bottom to require friends. But if a person, by reason of his greatness in the eyes of others, remains too long in a friendless condition then even when he meets someone who is willing to give of himself in that subtle relationship which is that of

friendship, this may come too late to help him overcome the corroding effect within of having lived upon a pinnacle.

Ouspensky was no longer the guru of a system or I any longer a member of his group during those long hours over so many nights that we sat in New York, both of us having come from thousands of miles away. I was a companion for nostalgic memories. I was just someone to talk to and who would talk back. Though he did not say in so many words that he was extremely unhappy, I knew he would not take so many drinks if he were happy. He was fond of me because I was companionable.

One day, a nice middle-aged couple, rich, who had become breathless devotees of P. D. Ouspensky, shocked me by saying: "You must be very highly developed to work so closely with Mr. Ouspensky."

It came as a shock because I saw I was flying under false colours for I was no more 'highly developed' as a result of what I was now doing than I had been when I was in England on the very periphery of the System. I knew it. The danger to myself of being supposed to be 'developed' far in advance of what I was, loomed into my mind. Here was a temptation to pose staring me in the face.

Then I became aware that Ouspensky had a certain interest in a man, a businessman, who had money and a girl friend. In short, a very unattractive man who kept an expensive mistress. Suddenly, this woman introduced the presumably rich widow of the long dead film star, Rudolph Valentino, to the lectures. What were such people seeking? Or was I wrong to think that people like this went from sensation to sensation because they had nothing else to do with their time?

One day Ouspensky instructed me to chastise on his behalf one of the people who had come from England with him after many years in the System, someone who in England had been almost as close to the central core as I now was. I could not do it. I would not, because I felt I would be doing something wrong towards this person and no less wrong to myself. Maybe, the person was a fool, but I was not going to be the instrument for chastisement for some minor thing, so minor that I have even forgotten what it was.

This incident, plus the remark of the couple who assumed I must be highly developed, disturbed me because it seemed an invitation to begin exerting power over people. I did not want to believe that Ouspensky had lost insight, and yet I felt that he had, or he would realise that however good or agreeable to him my intelligence might be in matters outside his System, I was not fit to be thought of as being in any way superior. I thought that the very last thing anyone should be encouraged in was arrogant action. I had that potential and I knew it.

Soon after this, Ouspensky mentioned he had heard of an exceptionally good restaurant where he intended to go to dinner some time. Then an afternoon came when

he instructed me to cancel the lecture set for that evening because he wanted to go to dinner at this restaurant which had very good food and wine. I cancelled the lecture and informed as many of the people as possible. Ouspensky then asked me to go out to dinner at this restaurant with him. It was a most excellent dinner, but during it I felt the time had come when I must ask him for an explanation as to how he could consider that this dinner justified the sudden cancellation of a lecture. Where did such action fit into the System, and where also did his violent temper towards some people fit in?

The thought went through my mind several times: Is it I who do not understand? Is it I who have lost all sense of proportion? Is it I who am being temperamental in feeling that I have a right to seek an explanation and not to take all this for granted as being in order?

When the coffee came, I asked: "Can you, or will you, explain how it is you could cancel a lecture at a few hours notice for the sake of this dinner? I don't understand. And I am sorry to feel compelled to ask you; but do you lose your temper with people consciously, or because you have lost control of yourself? You do not lose your temper with me in this way..."

"They are such fools," he said. "I've lost control of my temper."

"But surely, if we are to try to control our negative emotions, we cannot learn from you, if you can't control yours," I said.

Ouspensky answered bluntly: "I took over the leadership to save the System. But I took it over before I had gained enough control over myself. I was not ready. I have lost control over myself. It is a long time since I could control my state of mind."

"Will you not try to gain control over your temper for everybody thinks you are testing them when you fly at them," I said, for it never entered my head that Peter Ouspensky was not speaking the truth.

"They are fools!" he said contemptuously.

"But I really feel I have learned something from the System," I said.

"Then you are the only one who ever has!" said Ouspensky.

"I have really tried." I said, "tried for myself."

"The others are deluding themselves. They have never gained anything," Ouspensky said.

For some strange reason I was not aghast at such revelations. I was not even shocked. I was sorry because I did not feel for a moment that Ouspensky wanted to be in this predicament of disillusion and realisation that he had tried to become a guru when he had not attained the resources in himself to keep control of himself.

“Why don’t you give up the lectures and try to gain control of yourself again?” I asked.

“The System has become a profession with me,” Ouspensky answered.

There could hardly have been a more honest exchange of question and answer and I respected P. D. Ouspensky for admitting his predicament. I did not feel he had defrauded me because I had not built the whole of my existence upon the System and I was not a devotee who would be lost in despair if my guru turned out to have feet of clay. I spoke to no one for I hoped that Peter Ouspensky would decide to bring his lectures to a halt and seek to gain control over himself.

As the days went on I thought of the predicament I was in with the young couple paying not only the rents and the bills for Mr. Ouspensky and Madam, but, that up to that moment, they had handed to me any amount of money that P. D. Ouspensky had told them to. And he had insisted that I take some of it for my own expenses.

“Will you not give up the lectures?” I asked later.

He did not say yes, or no. I waited a week and then another. We often went out and talked a great deal. It was often about the attitude of the people who stayed in the country house. He knew they were afraid to be on their own. He was never indignant or enraged at my questioning him. I feel that he would have liked to halt the situation. But the question was how?

One day he said something that was somehow more revealing than anything else as to the way a man becomes entangled in a role, or a vocation.

“In Russia,” said Ouspensky, “there used to be a thousand or two thousand people at my lectures. Here there are a hundred—too few.”

Was it that a thousand or two thousand ordinary people did not corrupt P. D. Ouspensky? But one hundred rich people ready to enshrine him as a Master of far greater development, as they supposed, than they could ever hope to attain had exerted the power to lead him to abandon his desire for control of himself? Or weakened his will to set about it?

One day he said: “I have become dependent on the comfort, the luxury. I can’t give it up.”

As I said earlier, no one was ever kinder to me in a human sense than P. D. Ouspensky. Fond he was of me, and honest with me, too; but he was prepared for me to continue doing what I had been doing, even though I knew he had lost his way. Evidently he could not feel at the time that he was wronging his followers by continuing his role of guru though convinced—if what he said was true—that no one was deriving any benefit from it.

I said I must leave the System, and I left. He wrote me a letter and from that letter I sensed that he had from affection told me the truth about his predicament. But he accepted that he could not extricate himself from the hold professional 'guruism' had gained upon him. It was years before I ever learned anything more about P. D. Ouspensky.

Here was a man who was at heart honest; a man who was not by any means devoid of compassion for people. But adulation and comfort and the dearth of friends and the terror of a period of war had sapped his will to keep theory and practice united. It was only after Ouspensky died that I was told by the person who had first introduced me to Ouspensky's books and the System, that towards the end of his life he found his direction again and had made a great effort to correct himself and his own system.

If a man of the undeniable qualities of Ouspensky can go off the track and become absorbed in egotism and dependence on easy living, and become callous as to the effects on himself and on others, what of the gurus who are less basically honest?

Being a guru is one of the riskier occupations psychologically, and being a devotee is no less risky. I have sometimes wondered how much damage P. D. Ouspensky did psychologically speaking to the people who were his devotees during the period he lost himself. I have also wondered what it was that shocked him out of his cynical and exploitive state of mind—if it is true, as I have been told, that he found himself again before he died.

One can only conclude that hero-worship under the guise of the guru-devotee relationship is just as often spiritually deadening *for both sides* as it is spiritually enlightening.

