

Gurdjieff

International Review

Home

Editor's Note

Latest Issue

▶ Past Issues

▶ His Writings

His Pupils

Movements

The Music

Group Work

▶ Books

About this Site

Contact Us

Online Store



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Gurdjieff

International Review

Welcome to the Gurdjieff International Review—a source of informed essays and commentary on the history, writings, and teachings of George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff.

Mr. Gurdjieff was an extraordinary man, a master in the truest sense. His teachings speak to our most essential questions: Who am I? Why am I here? What is the purpose of life, and of human life in particular? As a young man, Gurdjieff relentlessly pursued these questions and became convinced that practical answers lay within ancient traditions. Through many years of searching and practice he discovered answers and then set about putting what he had learned into a form understandable to the Western world. Gurdjieff maintained that, owing to the abnormal conditions of modern life, we no longer function in a harmonious way. He taught that in order to become harmonious, we must develop new faculties—or actualize latent potentialities—through “work on oneself.” He presented his teachings and ideas in three forms: writings, music, and movements which correspond to our intellect, emotions, and physical body.

[Excerpts from the Talks and Writings of G. I. Gurdjieff](#)

These selected excerpts on philosophy, religion, science, and psychology are drawn from key passages of Gurdjieff’s writings and notes on his talks.

[Gurdjieff, G. I.](#)



“There do exist enquiring minds, which long for the truth of the heart, seek it, strive to solve the problems set by life, try to penetrate to the essence of things and phenomena and to penetrate into themselves. If a man reasons and thinks soundly, no matter which path he follows in solving these problems, he must inevitably arrive back at himself, and begin with the solution of the problem of what he is himself and what his place is in the world around him.”

G. I. Gurdjieff

“Gurdjieff gave me many new ideas I did not know before, and he gave a system I did not know before. About schools I did know, for I had been travelling and looking for schools for 10 years. He had an extraordinary system, and quite new. Some separate fragments of it could be found elsewhere, but not connected and put together like they are in this system.”

P. D. Ouspensky

by Michel de Salzmann

Dr. de Salzmann provides an informed and thoughtful synopsis of Gurdjieff's life, writings and influence as "an incomparable 'awakener' of men" and spiritual teacher who "left behind him a school embodying a specific methodology for the development of consciousness... The Gurdjieff teaching has emerged ... as one of the most penetrating spiritual teachings of modern times."

Gurdjieff: The Man and the Literature

Gurdjieff's biographer James Moore provides a sensitive and discerning guide to Gurdjieff's life and the classics of the Gurdjieff literature in English. This essay was originally published in *Resurgence* No. 96, January–February 1983 (Bideford, England) and is reproduced with the kind permission of the editor, Satish Kumar, and of the author.

George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (1877–1949) by P. L. Travers

Travers—author of the *Mary Poppins* books—combines a historical account of Gurdjieff's search and teaching with a pupil's personal impressions of "this man whose life has the air of authentic myth." She emphasizes that Gurdjieff "had come not to bring peace but a special kind of inner warfare and that his mission in life was to destroy men's complacency and make them aware of their limitations. Only by such means, by what he called 'conscious labours and intentional sufferings,' was it possible to bring about their inner development. The Work, as his method came to be called, had, as it very soon appeared, been only too accurately named."

Gurdjieff: The Unknown Man by Kenneth Walker

"I beg myself as well as my readers not to mistake understanding for attainment; and not to imagine, on the strength of their realization of certain truths, that they possess them, or still less, that they can use them. Our being, in which alone truth is possessed, is still a long way behind our understanding."

A. R. Orage

"Gurdjieff was a danger. A real threat. A threat for one's self-calming, a threat for the little regard one had of oneself, a threat for the comfortable repertoire where we generally live. But at the moment when this threat appeared, like a ditch to cross, a threshold to step over, one was helped to cross it by his presence itself."

Michel de Salzmann

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March 20, 2002

Dr. Walker's vivid account, particularly of his first visit to Gurdjieff's Paris apartment in the late 1940s, is distinguished by his keenly trained powers of observation as a physician.

"Gurdjieff used to say that a man revealed himself most clearly in his reactions to sexuality and to money. I could add yet another signpost to a man's personality, namely, his reaction to Gurdjieff himself. Many reactions were possible, but it was impossible to be indifferent to him or to forget that he was there... Whatever he was, he was something on a much bigger scale than one had ever seen before, or is ever likely to see again."

Gurdjieff Observed **by Roger Lipsey**

Drawing on excerpts from the lesser known but "unexpectedly rich secondary literature," Lipsey assembles a vivid composite portrait of Gurdjieff and the ontological challenge he presented to everyone around him. In so doing, he provides an excellent introductory survey of the anecdotal literature about Gurdjieff.

G. I. Gurdjieff and His School **by Jacob Needleman**

Professor Needleman surveys those aspects of Gurdjieff's "life and teaching that are of signal importance for anyone approaching this influential spiritual teacher for the first time."

He traces how Gurdjieff's influence is becoming a factor in contemporary civilization and describes the international activities of The Gurdjieff Foundation.

An Introduction to the Writings **of G. I. Gurdjieff** **by J. Walter Driscoll**

This synopsis is drawn from the author's *Gurdjieff: a Reading Guide*. It briefly sketches the contents and publication history of

Gurdjieff's writings and the notes that have been published of his talks.

[All and Everything](#) [by G. I. Gurdjieff](#)

In these first two pages of Gurdjieff's *All and Everything*, the author concisely describes the scope and purpose of his writings which were "All written according to entirely new principles of logical reasoning."

[People Who Hunger and Thirst](#) [for Truth](#)

Gurdjieff discusses the obstacles and deceptions faced by anyone in search of inner truth and spiritual guidance. First published in *Views from the Real World: Early Talks of Gurdjieff*, pp. 50–51, 56–58, New York: Dutton, London: Routledge & Kegan.

[Gurdjieff's Aphorisms](#)

Gurdjieff's aphorisms as inscribed in a special script above the walls of the Study House of the Chateau du Prieuré at Fontainebleau in which Gurdjieff established his [Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man](#).



Gurdjieff International Review

Publisher's Note

May 1, 2002

Welcome to the Gurdjieff International Review. Our latest printed issue on Movements and Sacred Dances (Vol. V No. 1, Spring 2002) has been mailed to our subscribers in early April. Copies are available via our [online store](#).

Greg Loy

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Revision: May 1, 2002

Gurdjieff

International Review

Spring 2002 Issue, Vol. V No. 1

A “Teacher of Dancing”

Guest Editorial
by Ellen Dooling Draper

Although we have been gathering articles about movements since we established the *Gurdjieff International Review* in 1996, this is the first time we have provided coverage of this vital aspect of Gurdjieff’s teaching. The views expressed in this collection are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of any specific organization. Our guest editor, Ellen Dooling Draper, is a member of the Gurdjieff Foundation of New York and a previous editor with *Parabola Magazine*.

Part I: Gurdjieff on Movements by G. I. Gurdjieff

Gurdjieff wrote sparingly about movements. The following excerpts taken from *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson*, *Meetings with Remarkable Men* and *Views from the Real World* are reprinted by the kind permission of Triangle Editions, Inc.

Part II: Historical Perspective

Descriptions of the practice and performance of Gurdjieff’s Movements during his lifetime, between 1920 and 1949.



“When one’s body revolts against work, fatigue soon sets in; then one must not rest for it would be a victory for the body. When the body desires to rest, don’t; when the mind knows it ought to rest, do so, but one must know and distinguish language of body and mind, and be honest.”

G. I. Gurdjieff

“What exactly are these movements? This question can really be answered only from direct experience of practice of the movements.”

Henri Thomasson

“Occasionally there were public performances. Gurdjieff, in one of his irrepressible freaks, would dress everyone up in Turkish costume. This just had to be

[Gurdjieff's Temple Dances](#) [by John G. Bennett](#)

John G. Bennett describes the “Temple Dances” Gurdjieff was teaching his pupils in Constantinople in 1920 and at the Prieuré in 1923.

[Dancing](#) [by Anna Butkovsky-Hewitt](#)

A skilled pianist and dancer, the author describes practicing movements in 1922–1923 as Gurdjieff prepared for public demonstrations in Paris and New York.

[Gurdjieff Movements Demonstration](#) [by Louise Welch](#)

Gurdjieff arrives in New York City in February 1924 and presents a movements demonstration at the Neighborhood Playhouse.

[The Role of Movement in the Complete Education of Man](#) [by René Daumal](#)

Daumal invites the reader to participate in a movements class lead by Jeanne de Salzmann in the 1930s.

[A Talk on the Dances](#) [by C. S. Nott](#)

This excerpt provides C. S. Nott’s vivid account of a 1947 talk in Paris on movements given “by an older pupil who was Gurdjieff’s ‘right hand.’”

[A Session of “Movements”](#) [by Pierre Schaeffer](#)

borne.”

Pierre Schaeffer

“When one begins to study the Movements, very quickly what becomes obvious is the weakness of the attention: it has no endurance, no defense against the endless motion of the associations, and it is often unconsciously taken away at the very moment that its full concentration would be needed.”

Paul Reynard

“We realise in the movements ... that one can collect one’s attention; that one can be awake at times and have an overall sensation of oneself; that a quietness of mind, an awareness of body and an interest of feeling can be brought together and that this results in a more complete state of attentiveness in which the life force is felt and one is sensitive to higher influences. Thus, one has a taste of how life can be lived differently.”

Jessmin Howarth

“You do not realize enough that your attention is your only chance. Without it you can do nothing.”

Jeanne de Salzmann

Pierre Schaeffer provides an exceptionally intelligent and heartfelt glimpse of his experience in Gurdjieff's movements class.

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May 1, 2002

Part III: Contemporary Perspective

Interviews and articles written since Gurdjieff's death in 1949. The photographs within this section are stills from documentary films of the Movements made from the period 1960–1974 under the direction of Jeanne de Salzmann. They are reproduced by the kind permission of the Institut Gurdjieff, Paris, and the heirs of Jeanne de Salzmann.

Remember Inner Work by Jessmin Howarth

Jessmin Howarth reviews the history of movements in Gurdjieff's groups and hints at some discoveries that the practice of the movements can provide.

Sacred Dance by Pauline de Dampierre

Pauline de Dampierre examines "the 'science of movement' which Gurdjieff rediscovered."

Working with the Movements by Henri Thomasson

Thomasson shares his struggle after he "experienced a strong rejection of 'the Movements', which Gurdjieff insisted on as an essential part of his teaching."

Dances are for the Mind by Paul Reynard

Reynard reminds us that the movements invite us to discover a new attentiveness and the opportunity to be both present and open to a new level of consciousness.

The Teacher of Dancing **by Josée de Salzman**

An informed examination of movements is provided and their role as “a language that our intellect cannot understand well but to which the body is sensitive.”

This Entity We Call the Body **by Don Hoyt**

The relationship between attention, the body, mind, awareness and movements as a “foundation for the real work of self study and self awaking” is examined.

The Music Has To Like You... **by Mitchell Rudzinski**

Mitchell Rudzinski’s advice and comments to his students regarding playing music for the movements is provided from their journals and notebooks.

On Giving up the Luxury of Knowing **by Stafford Ordahl**

Ordahl considers the courage to abandon what is known mechanically in favor of trusting an unknown “something else” to be able to play movements music.

Behind the Visible Movement **by Jeanne de Salzman**

The inner movement of attention upon which the outer movement depends.

Gurdjieff

International Review

[Home](#)

[Editor's Note](#)

[Latest Issue](#)

▼ [Past Issues](#)

[Overview](#)

[Vol. I No. 1](#)

[Vol. I No. 2](#)

[Vol. I No. 3](#)

[Vol. I No. 4](#)

[Vol. II No. 1](#)

[Vol. II No. 2](#)

[Vol. II No. 3](#)

[Vol. II No. 4](#)

[Vol. III No. 1](#)

[Vol. III No. 2](#)

[Vol. IV No. 1](#)

[Vol. IV No. 2](#)

► [His Writings](#)

[His Pupils](#)

[Movements](#)

[The Music](#)

[Group Work](#)

► [Books](#)

[About this Site](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Online Store](#)



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Gurdjieff

International Review

Home

Editor's Note

Latest Issue

▶ **Past Issues**

▼ **His Writings**

Beelzebub's Tales

Meetings

Life Is Real

Views

Bibliographies

His Pupils

Movements

The Music

Group Work

▶ **Books**

About this Site

Contact Us

Online Store



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ISSN 1524-4784

April 1, 2002



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Gurdjieff's Pupils

Followers— then Leaders of the Teaching



[Adie, George](#)

George Adie first studied with P. D. Ouspensky and later Gurdjieff. After many years in England working with other prominent pupils such as Henriette Lannes and Jane Heap, Mr. Adie moved to Australia and established groups there.



[Anderson, Margaret](#)

Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap were founding editors of the legendary *Little Review*. She met Gurdjieff in New York in 1924 and shortly thereafter relocated to Paris, partly to study with him at his Institute at Fontainebleau. She then continued to study with Gurdjieff in France until his death.

Bibliography



[Bennett, John G.](#)

J. G. Bennett was a British scientist, mathematician, and philosopher who integrated scientific research with studies of Asiatic languages and religions. Bennett travelled widely and met many spiritual leaders. In the early 1920s, he was introduced to G. I. Gurdjieff and P. D. Ouspensky, who both became central guiding forces in his life.

Bibliography



Daumal, René

Bibliography

One of the most gifted literary figures in France in the early part of the twentieth century, René Daumal was a genuine seeker of truth. In the later part of his life, he had the good fortune to meet and work with Gurdjieff.



Fremantle, Christopher

Bibliography

The tall, soft-spoken Christopher Fremantle first met P. D. Ouspensky in 1935. Later he was introduced to Gurdjieff in Paris and worked with him until G's death. In 1951, he started groups in Mexico and worked with them for the next 30 years. He also led groups in the U.S.



Hartmann, Thomas de

Bibliography

Thomas de Hartmann was born in the Ukraine and was already an acclaimed composer in Russia when he first met Gurdjieff. He spent the years 1917–1929 as a pupil and confidant of Gurdjieff. While at the Prieuré, he collaborated with Gurdjieff to compose hundreds of musical works that continue to inspire listeners.



Hartmann, Olga de

Bibliography

Olga de Hartmann was a major figure in the transmission of the teachings of Gurdjieff. Having met Gurdjieff in 1917, she worked with him intensely in very trying and even dangerous conditions until 1929. She was Gurdjieff's private secretary for many of these years and often helped with his writings.

Bibliography**Heap, Jane**

Even before she met Gurdjieff, Jane Heap was a legendary thinker and raconteur. She first met A. R. Orage through her work on *The Little Review* and Gurdjieff during his 1924 visit to New York. In the fall of 1935, Gurdjieff sent Heap to London to direct groups.

Bibliography**Hulme, Kathryn**

Author of *The Nun's Story*, *The Wild Place*, and *Undiscovered Country* (a description of her years with Gurdjieff). A woman of boundless energy, she was also an astute and perceptive observer of life around her.

**Lannes, Henriette**

That the Work in England is today so firmly established is preponderantly owed to one woman. Active in London for nearly three decades, this remarkable human being guaranteed the Work's ethos, dynamic, and trajectory. Her name was Madame Lannes.

**Lester, John**

John Lester, a native of Australia, went to England in 1939 to study medicine. His life was forever altered when he met Jane Heap and then Mr. Gurdjieff, who he visited in Paris with other members of Jane's London group after the war.

**March, Louise**

One evening in early 1929, Lousie March was invited to the studios of Carnegie Hall, where Gurdjieff was hosting a recital of piano music. By late spring, she found herself crossing the Atlantic to live and study at his Institute for the Harmonious Development in France.



Nicoll, Maurice

Bibliography

In 1921, Dr. Maurice Nicoll was Jung's leading exponent when he met P. D. Ouspensky. The following year, he went to the Prieuré to study directly with Gurdjieff. He afterwards resumed his psychiatric practice in London and studied under Ouspensky until 1931 when Ouspensky gave him permission to teach.



Nott, C. Stanley

Bibliography

In 1923, C. S. Nott first met Gurdjieff and A. R. Orage in New York. At the Prieuré, Nott experienced sustained and intense periods of inner work with Gurdjieff. He was also a close associate of Orage, Dr. Stjoernal, Thomas de Hartmann and later Ouspensky.



Nyland, Willem A.

Bibliography

Mr. Nyland first met Gurdjieff in 1924 and was one of the founding members of Orage's New York group. He maintained close contact with Gurdjieff for the next 25 years. Mr. Nyland was also one of the original founders and trustees of the Gurdjieff Foundation and started his own groups in America and Europe.



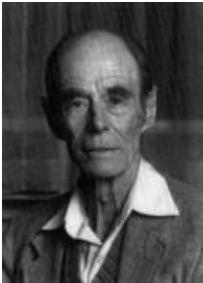
Orage, Alfred R.

Bibliography

A. R. Orage was a leading pupil of Gurdjieff. Having met Ouspensky in 1914 and later Gurdjieff in 1922, Orage surrendered the forefront of intellectual life in London to study at the Prieuré. In January 1924, Orage went to New York to help Gurdjieff with his first visit to America and later introduced and supervised the Work there.

Bibliography**Ouspensky, Peter D.**

P. D. Ouspensky was a major contributor to Twentieth century ideas. He anticipated many of the key questions in philosophy, psychology and religion that have driven and informed us throughout the century. He studied intensively with Gurdjieff between 1915–1918 and throughout the rest of his life continued to promote Gurdjieff's system.

Bibliography**Pentland, Lord**

Lord Pentland was a pupil of Ouspensky for many years during the 1930s and 1940s. He began to study intensely with Gurdjieff in 1948. Gurdjieff then appointed him to lead the Work in North America. He became president of the Gurdjieff Foundation when it was established in New York in 1953 and remained in that position until his death.

**Salzmán, Alexandre de**

When Alexandre de Salzmán and his wife Jeanne first met Gurdjieff in 1919, he was already a well known stage lighting artist in both Russia and Germany. He soon gave up his professional career to follow Gurdjieff and was one of the founding members of the *Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man*.

**Salzmán, Jeanne de**

Having first met Gurdjieff with her husband in 1919, Madame de Salzmán studied with Gurdjieff for three decades. After Gurdjieff's death in 1949, she took primary responsibility for carrying on the Gurdjieff Work. She published his books and helped preserve the form of his Movements.



[Salzmann, Michel de](#)

From 1990 until his recent passing in August 2001, Dr. de Salzmann directed the network of Gurdjieff foundations, societies, and institutes around the world. His friends salute him as one of the most important spiritual figures of our century.



[Segal, William](#)

William Segal taught and embodied a threefold life: theosopher, artist, and man of the market. As an artist, he developed an appreciation for the enigma of self-portraiture. To see and be seen simultaneously, he felt, leads toward Essence—toward what truly is, no more, no less.



[Staveley, Annie Lou](#)

Bibliography

Mrs. Staveley lived in England for more than thirty years and was introduced to the Work by Jane Heap. In 1946, she traveled to Paris to study with Mr. Gurdjieff. She eventually moved to rural Oregon and started a community named Two Rivers Farm.



[Tracol, Henri](#)

Bibliography

Former journalist, photographer and sculptor, Henri Tracol was also a close pupil of Gurdjieff for ten years. As a leading exponent of the Gurdjieff teaching, he was President of the Gurdjieff Institute in France.



[Travers, Pamela](#)

Although there is uncertainty as to where and when Pamela Travers first met Mr. Gurdjieff, she spoke more freely about her friendship with A. R. Orage which developed when he published one of her poems in the *New Age*.



[Walker, Kenneth](#)

Bibliography

Kenneth Walter—a gifted surgeon—first met P. D. Ouspensky in 1923. He studied and practiced the ideas of Gurdjieff from that time until his death in 1966. A prolific author, his *Venture with Ideas* and *A Study of Gurdjieff's Teaching* provide valuable introductions to Gurdjieff's ideas.



[Welch, Louise](#)

Bibliography

Louise Welch studied with A. R. Orage during his eight years in New York. She went on to become a senior leader in the study of Gurdjieff's teaching. In her book, *Orage with Gurdjieff in America*, she provides a vividly personal account of Orage's background and his continuing influence as Gurdjieff's representative in America.



[Welch, William](#)

Bibliography

Dr. William Welch attended Gurdjieff at his death and was President of the Gurdjieff Foundation in New York, succeeding John Pentland.

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Photo of Lord Pentland © 1983 David Sailors
Revision: February 23, 2002

Gurdjieff

International Review

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The Gurdjieff / de Hartmann Music

Editorial Introduction

Gurdjieff embodied his teaching in three forms: ideas (both written and oral), movements, and music. An accomplished professional composer, Thomas de Hartmann collaborated on several hundred musical compositions with Gurdjieff in the 1920s. This issue is focused on this music and its legacy.

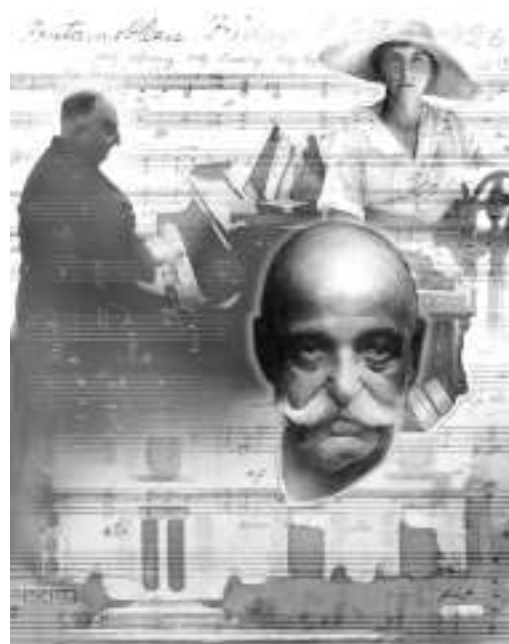
On Listening to the Gurdjieff / de Hartmann Music

This anonymous commentary was written for the *Gurdjieff International Review* by a senior member of the Gurdjieff Society in London. For the author “it became apparent that for music to say what it had to say depended as much on the listening as what was listened to.”

Music: Our Life with Mr Gurdjieff

Written by Thomas and Olga de Hartmann, this account of the musical collaboration between Gurdjieff and Thomas de Hartmann was first published as Chapter 25 of *Our Life with Mr Gurdjieff: Definitive Edition*.

The Music of Gurdjieff / de Hartmann



“I had a very difficult and trying time with this music. Mr Gurdjieff sometimes whistled or played on the piano with one finger a very complicated sort of melody—as are all Eastern melodies, although they seem at first to be monotonous. To grasp this melody, to transcribe it in European notation, required a tour de force.”

Thomas de Hartmann

“It is the consistency and objectivity of his [Gurdjieff’s] essential tone that is so compelling. Whether in a delicate dance, a soulful song, or an uncompromisingly stark hymn, one hears always his call to return to and confront one’s inmost being.”

Laurence Rosenthal

[Triangle Editions Recordings](#)

Three selections of piano music from the Triangle Editions Recordings, chosen with commentary by Tom Daly, are performed by Thomas de Hartmann and reproduced in audio (MP3) format. In addition to carrying the authority of being the composer's recordings, these evocative performances from the 1950's are unsurpassed in their own right.

[Music Manuscript Sample Page by Thomas de Hartmann](#)

This first page of *Holy Affirming, Holy Denying, Holy Reconciling* is taken from de Hartmann's music manuscripts. It is also partially reproduced in the Triangle Editions record album and CD notes. Besides showing de Hartmann's elegant music calligraphy, it contains his English handwriting, and connects to expressions used in *Beelzebub's Tales*.

[The Sound of Gurdjieff by Laurence Rosenthal](#)

This essay was originally published in Parabola Magazine, Volume XI (3) 1985, as a review of the four-record album brought out by Triangle Editions in 1985. Reprinted with kind permission of Parabola and the author.

[Gurdjieff / de Hartmann Music for the Piano Wergo / Schott Recordings](#)

Eugene E. Foster provides an appreciative introduction to the first two of a four volume series of compact discs and printed music being issued by Wergo / Schott Music in Mainz, Germany. When completed, it will form the most comprehensive set of recordings and sheet music available of the Gurdjieff / de Hartmann music. Piano performances are by Linda Daniel-Spitz, Charles Ketcham and Laurence Rosenthal.

“The music is very varied, from folk songs to sacred hymns, and the responses evoked are equally varied, sometimes speaking of the suffering and joy of a human life, sometimes eliciting a strange and quite unfamiliar coloration of the feelings, and sometimes, for me at least, as if conveying a definite knowledge hidden from my ordinary thoughts.”

Anonymous

“We had been brought to a level of pondering we had never before experienced. Finally she [Olga de Hartmann] planted a seed that grew inside this silence: ‘There is only one important thing—to actually develop our possibilities. We should not be content with anything else, or anything less.’”

Thomas C. Daly

“An object attracts us; we do not attract the object. Objects govern us from outside. They make us do all sorts of things. It is not the woman who buys the hat, but the hat buys the woman. The man does not smoke the cigarette; the cigarette smokes the man, as Mr. Gurdjieff said. The attention and the will generated by outside objects, through the senses, are not our own. They are part of the mechanism of Nature: Nature works us. We do not conquer Nature; Nature conquers us.”

Gurdjieff and Music
by Laurence Rosenthal

[Sample Only]

The original English version of this essay was first published in *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching*, New York: Continuum, 1996, pages 301–310. Reprinted with kind permission of the author.

Music for the Film Meetings with
Remarkable Men
by Laurence Rosenthal

[Sample Only]

This account of the challenges film composer Laurence Rosenthal encountered when selecting and adapting music for Peter Brook's film of Gurdjieff's book was originally circulated as an insert in some of the press packets released with the film in 1978. Updated for this publication, Mr. Rosenthal emphasizes the importance of Russian composer Thomas de Hartmann's music in the film.

On Thomas de Hartmann
by Thomas C. Daly and Thomas A. G.
Daly

On Olga de Hartmann
by Thomas C. Daly and Thomas A. G.
Daly

These two biographical sketches were originally published in *Our Life with Mr Gurdjieff: Definitive Edition*, London: Penguin Arkana, 1992, 277p.

Attention—Wish—Will—Free Will
A Talk by Mr. de Hartmann

Thomas de Hartmann

“In order to awaken you have to think: ‘all this agitation is external to me.’ You need an act of reflection. But if this act sets off in you new automatisms, in one’s memory and one’s reasoning process, your voice could continue to maintain that you were still reflecting: but instead you would have again fallen asleep. Thus you can spend entire days without awakening for a single instant. Waking is not a state but an act.”

René Daumal

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July 1, 1999

Tom Daly read Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous* on its publication in 1949, then had the good fortune to meet and befriend the de Hartmanns while they were living near Montreal in 1951. First published here, he describes the setting and impact of Thomas de Hartmann's 1954 talk to the then fledgling Toronto group.

[A Special Evening at the Essentuki Social Club](#) *[Sample Only]*

Tom Daly recounts a day in 1918 when Thomas de Hartmann learned a painful lesson from Mr. Gurdjieff.

Other New Features

[The Strait Gate](#) [by Basarab Nicolescu](#)

First published in *Poésie 99* (78) Paris, June 1999, this essay is translated from the French "La Porte Étroite" by Martha Heyneman for its first English publication here. Nicolescu points out that "It is high time to undertake a serious inquiry into the relation between Daumal's own work and the influence Gurdjieff's teaching had upon him," and calls for the undertaking of such "a detailed study conducted in conformity with all the rules of scholarship." We propose Kathleen Rosenblatt's recent *René Daumal: The Life of a Mystic Guide* as a candidate for this position.

[Daumal with Gurdjieff and the de Salzmanns](#) [by Kathleen F. Rosenblatt](#) *[Sample Only]*

The first part of Chapter 9 from Kathleen Rosenblatt's recent book *René Daumal: The Life and Work of a Mystic Guide*, (1999) New York: SUNY Press, is reproduced by permission of the State University of New York Press and the author.



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Editorial

Working with Others

Anyone who wishes to engage in the practical study of Gurdjieff's teaching is likely to find the task of finding guidance to be a challenging exercise in discrimination. Although Gurdjieff died in 1949, many groups continue to meet which were initiated by him, by his direct pupils, or by senior students of pupils who worked with Gurdjieff and were authorized to transmit his teaching. With little or no publicity, and in some cases for many decades, these groups have maintained their commitment to the study of Gurdjieff's teaching: his writings, movements, music, practical group work and guided individual practices presented in an oral tradition.

For most of the twentieth century, many people—including philosophers, psychologists, writers, and artists—have been influenced by Gurdjieff's ideas. Most acknowledge this without posing as a source of his teaching. The situation is complicated by the growing number of individuals and organizations that find it convenient to borrow and adapt sometimes powerful ideas and practices from the Gurdjieff legacy for their own philosophical, psychological, or commercial purposes—sometimes claiming to offer a new dispensation that supersedes what Gurdjieff taught.

The burgeoning schools of enneagram analysis are an example of where a single diagram is taken from Gurdjieff, but everything else is the innovation of authors who present the enneagram as a classification system for personality analysis. The resulting speculation is unconnected with Gurdjieff's ideas and teaching. The same situation arises when variations and imitations of Gurdjieff's "movements" or "sacred dances" are demonstrated as musical calisthenics.

Real teachings inevitably generate such deflections, imitations, and distortions.

That someone mentions Gurdjieff, discusses his ideas at length, or personally knew him offers the sincere seeker no guarantee of substance. Conversely, although they do not mention him, books such as Maurice Nicoll's New Testament exegesis *The New Man*, and René Daumal's unfinished allegorical novel *Mount Analogue*, are highly valued by students of Gurdjieff because these compelling works of literature are profoundly rooted in his legacy.

Valuable clarification of these points can be found in Henri Tracol's essay "[Let Us Not Conclude](#),"¹ in Dr. M. de Salzmann's essay "Footnote to the Gurdjieff Literature,"² and in the excerpt contained within

this issue titled “[People Who Hunger and Thirst for Truth.](#)”³

Thanks to the readers who made valuable contributions in shaping this page and wish to remain anonymous.

Walter Driscoll

Greg Loy

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¹ First English publication in *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching* edited by Jacob Needleman, George Baker, and Mary Stein from the French edition compiled by Bruno de Panafieu. New York: Continuum, 1996, pp. 427–430. Reprinted in the *Gurdjieff International Review*, Vol. III (1), Fall 1999.

² First English publication in *Parabola*. New York: Vol. V (3), Summer, 1980 and revised in *Gurdjieff: an annotated bibliography* compiled by J. Walter Driscoll and the Gurdjieff Foundation of California. New York: Garland, 1985, pp. xv–xxv.

³ *Views from the Real World: Early Talks of Gurdjieff*, pp. 50–58.

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▶ [Past Issues](#)

▶ [His Writings](#)

[His Pupils](#)

[Movements](#)

[The Music](#)

[Group Work](#)

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[Book Reviews](#)

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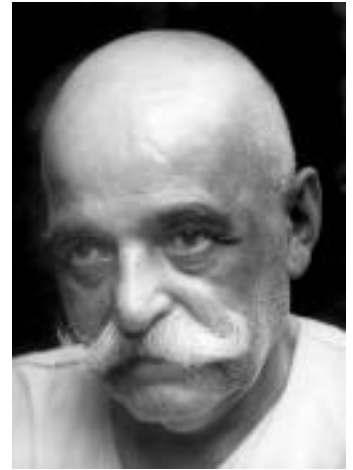
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Gurdjieff Electronic Publishing
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Los Altos, CA 94022 US



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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Selected Excerpts from the Talks and Writings of G. I. Gurdjieff

Every branch of science endeavors to elaborate and to establish an exact language for itself. But there is no universal language. For exact understanding exact language is necessary.... This new language is based on the principle of relativity; that is to say, it introduces relativity into all concepts and thus makes possible an accurate determination of the angle of thought—making it possible to establish at once what is being said, from what point of view and in what connection. In this new language all ideas are concentrated round one idea. This central idea is the idea of evolution ... *and the evolution of man is the evolution of his consciousness.*

G. I. Gurdjieff, paraphrased from page 70 of *IN SEARCH OF THE MIRACULOUS*

Philosophy and Religion

THERE DO EXIST ENQUIRING MINDS, which long for the truth of the heart, seek it, strive to solve the problems set by life, try to penetrate to the essence of things and phenomena and to penetrate into themselves. If a man reasons and thinks soundly, no matter which path he follows in solving these problems, he must inevitably arrive back at himself, and begin with the solution of the problem of what he is himself and what his place is in the world around him. For without this knowledge, he will have no focal point in his search. Socrates' words, "Know thyself" remain for all those who seek true knowledge and being.

VIEWS FROM THE REAL WORLD, p. 43 [pb]

LIBERATION LEADS TO LIBERATION. These are the first words of truth—not truth in quotation marks but truth in the real meaning of the word; truth which is not merely theoretical, not simply a word, but truth that can be realized in practice. The meaning behind these words may be explained as follows:

By liberation is meant the liberation which is the aim of all schools, all religions, at all times.

This liberation can indeed be very great. All men desire it and strive after it. But it cannot be attained without the first liberation, a lesser liberation. The great liberation is liberation from influences outside us. The lesser liberation is liberation from influences within us.

VIEWS FROM THE REAL WORLD, p. 266

RELIGION IS DOING; a man does not merely *think* his religion or feel it, he ‘lives’ his religion as much as he is able, otherwise it is not religion but fantasy or philosophy. Whether he likes it or not he shows his attitude towards religion by his actions and he can show his attitude *only by his actions*. Therefore if his actions are opposed to those which are demanded by a given religion he cannot assert that he belongs to that religion.

IN SEARCH OF THE MIRACULOUS, p. 299

ONE MUST LEARN TO PRAY, JUST AS ONE MUST LEARN EVERYTHING ELSE. Whoever knows how to pray and is able to concentrate in the proper way, his prayer can give results. But it must be understood that there are different prayers and that their results are different. This is known even from ordinary divine service. But when we speak of prayer or of the results of prayer we always imply only one kind of prayer—petition, or we think that petition can be united with all other kinds of prayers.... Most prayers have nothing in common with petitions. I speak of ancient prayers; many of them are much older than Christianity. These prayers are, so to speak, *recapitulations*; by repeating them aloud or to himself a man endeavors to experience what is in them, their whole content, with his mind and his feeling.

IN SEARCH OF THE MIRACULOUS, p. 300

THE COMMANDMENT INCULCATED IN ME IN MY CHILDHOOD, enjoining that “the highest aim and sense of human life is the striving to attain the welfare of one’s neighbor,” and that this is possible exclusively only by the conscious renunciation of one’s own.

BEELZEBUB’S TALES, p. 1186

ALL THE BEINGS OF THIS PLANET THEN BEGAN TO WORK in order to have in their consciousness this Divine function of genuine conscience, and for this purpose, as everywhere in the Universe, they transubstantiated in themselves what are called the ‘being-obligolnian-strivings’ which consist of the following five, namely:

The first striving: to have in their ordinary being-existence everything satisfying and really necessary for their planetary body.

The second striving: to have a constant and unflagging instinctive need for self-perfection in the sense of being.

The third: the conscious striving to know ever more and more concerning the laws of World-creation and World-maintenance.

The fourth: the striving from the beginning of their existence to pay for their arising and their individuality as quickly as possible, in order afterwards to be free to lighten as much as possible the Sorrow of our Common Father.

And the fifth: the striving always to assist the most rapid perfecting of other beings, both those similar to oneself and those of other forms, up to the degree of the sacred ‘Martfotai’ that is up to the degree of self-individuality.

BEELZEBUB’S TALES, pp. 385–386

IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO EXPLAIN WHAT TAKES PLACE IN ME when I see or hear anything majestic which allows no doubt that it proceeds from the actualization of Our Maker Creator. Each time, my tears flow of themselves. I weep, that is to say, it weeps in me, not from grief, no, but as if from tenderness. I became so, gradually, after meeting Father Giovanni....

After that meeting my whole inner and outer world became for me quite different. In the definite views which had become rooted in me in the course of my whole life, there took place, as it were by itself, a revaluation of all values.

Before that meeting, I was a man wholly engrossed in my own personal interests and pleasures, and also in the interests and pleasures of my children. I was always occupied with thoughts of how best to satisfy my needs and the needs of my children.

Formerly, it may be said, my whole being was possessed by egoism. All my manifestations and experiencings flowed from my vanity. The meeting with Father Giovanni killed all this, and from then on there gradually arose in me that “something” which has brought the whole of me to the unshakable conviction that, apart from the vanities of life, there exists a “something else” which must be the aim and ideal of every more or less thinking man, and that it is only this something else which may make a man really happy and give him real values, instead of the illusory “goods” with which in ordinary life he is always and in everything full.

Professor Skridlov, MEETINGS WITH REMARKABLE MEN, pp. 245–246

YES, PROFESSOR, KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING ARE QUITE DIFFERENT. Only understanding can lead to being, whereas knowledge is but a passing presence in it. New knowledge displaces the old and the result is, as it were, a pouring from the empty into the void.

One must strive to understand; this alone can lead to our Lord God.

And in order to be able to understand the phenomena of nature, according and not according to law, proceeding around us, one must first of all consciously perceive and assimilate a mass of information concerning objective truth and the real events which took place on earth in the past; and secondly, one must bear in oneself all the results of all kinds of voluntary and involuntary experiencings.

MEETINGS WITH REMARKABLE MEN, p. 242

FAITH CAN NOT BE GIVEN TO MAN. Faith arises in a man and increases in its action in him not as the result of automatic learning, that is, not from any automatic ascertainment of height, breadth, thickness,

form and weight, or from the perception of anything by sight, hearing, touch, smell or taste, but from understanding.

Understanding is the essence obtained from information intentionally learned and from all kinds of experiences personally experienced.

MEETINGS WITH REMARKABLE MEN, p. 240

ALL RELIGIONS SPEAK ABOUT DEATH DURING THIS LIFE ON EARTH. Death must come before rebirth. But what must die? False confidence in one's own knowledge, self-love and egoism. Our egoism must be broken. We must realize that we are very complicated machines, and so this process of breaking is bound to be a long and difficult task. Before real growth becomes possible, our personality must die.

VIEWS FROM THE REAL WORLD, p. 86

THE SOLE MEANS NOW FOR THE SAVING OF THE BEINGS OF THE PLANET EARTH would be to implant again into their presences a new organ, an organ like Kundabuffer, but this time of such properties that every one of those unfortunates during the process of existence should constantly sense and be cognizant of the inevitability of his own death as well as of the death of everyone upon whom his eyes or attention rests.

Only such a sensation and such a cognizance can now destroy the egoism completely crystallized in them that has swallowed up the whole of their Essence and also that tendency to hate others which flows from it—the tendency, namely, which engenders all those mutual relationships existing there, which serve as the chief cause of all their abnormalities unbecoming to three-brained beings and maleficent for them themselves and for the whole of the Universe.

BEELZEBUB'S TALES, p. 1183

WILL IS A SIGN OF A BEING OF A VERY HIGH ORDER OF EXISTENCE as compared with the being of an ordinary man. Only men who are in possession of such a being can do. All other men are merely automata, put into action by external forces like machines or clockwork toys, acting as much and as long as the wound-up spring within them acts, and not capable of adding anything to its force.

VIEWS FROM THE REAL WORLD, p. 71

Faith of consciousness is freedom
Faith of feeling is weakness
Faith of body is stupidity.

Love of consciousness evokes the same in response
Love of feeling evokes the opposite
Love of body depends only on type and polarity.

Hope of consciousness is strength
Hope of feelings is slavery
Hope of body is disease.

BEELZEBUB'S TALES, p. 361

Science and Psychology

IN RIGHT KNOWLEDGE the study of man must proceed on parallel lines with the study of the world, and the study of the world must run parallel with the study of man. Laws are everywhere the same, in the world as well as in man. Having mastered the principles of any one law we must look for its manifestation in the world and in man simultaneously.... This parallel study of the world and of man shows the student the fundamental unity of everything and helps him to find analogies in phenomena of different orders.

IN SEARCH OF THE MIRACULOUS, p. 122

AS EVERYTHING IN THE UNIVERSE IS ONE, so, consequently, everything has equal rights, therefore from this point of view knowledge can be acquired by a suitable and complete study, no matter what the starting point is. Only one must know how to 'learn.' What is nearest to us is man; and you are the nearest of all men to yourself. Begin with the study of yourself; remember the saying 'Know thyself.'

VIEWS FROM THE REAL WORLD, p. 25

BUT OBJECTIVE KNOWLEDGE, THE IDEA OF UNITY INCLUDED, belongs to objective consciousness. The forms which express this knowledge when perceived by subjective consciousness are inevitably distorted and, instead of truth, they create more and more delusions. With objective consciousness it is possible to see and feel the unity of everything. But for subjective consciousness the world is split up into millions of separate and unconnected phenomena. Attempts to connect these phenomena into some sort of system in a scientific or philosophical way lead to nothing because man cannot reconstruct the idea of the whole starting from separate facts and they cannot divine the principles of the division of the whole without knowing the laws upon which this division is based.

IN SEARCH OF THE MIRACULOUS, p. 279

EVERY PHENOMENON, ON WHATEVER SCALE and in whatever world it may take place, from molecular to cosmic phenomena, is the result of the combination or the meeting of three different and opposing forces. Contemporary thought realizes the existence of two forces and the necessity of these two forces for the production of a phenomenon: force and resistance, positive and negative magnetism, positive and negative electricity, male and female cells, and so on. But it does not observe even these two forces

always and everywhere. No question has ever been raised as to the third, or if it has been raised it has scarcely been heard.

IN SEARCH OF THE MIRACULOUS, p. 77

ALL THIS AND MANY OTHER THINGS CAN ONLY BE EXPLAINED WITH THE HELP OF THE LAW OF OCTAVES together with an understanding of the role and significance of ‘intervals’ which cause the line of the development of force constantly to change, to go in a broken line, to turn round, to become its ‘own opposite’ and so on.

Such a course of things, that is, a change of direction, we can observe in everything. After a certain period of energetic activity or strong emotion or a right understanding a reaction comes, work becomes tedious and tiring; moments of fatigue and indifference enter into feeling; instead of right thinking a search for compromises begins; suppression, evasion of difficult problems. But the line continues to develop though now not in the same direction as at the beginning. Work becomes mechanical, feeling becomes weaker and weaker, descends to the level of the common events of the day; thought becomes dogmatic, literal. Everything proceeds in this way for a certain time, then again there is reaction, again a stop, again a deviation. The development of the force may continue but the work which was begun with great zeal and enthusiasm has become an obligatory and useless formality; a number of entirely foreign elements have entered into feeling—considering, vexation, irritation, hostility; thought goes round in a circle, repeating what was known before, and the way out which had been found becomes more and more lost.

The same thing happens in all spheres of human activity. In literature, science, art, philosophy, religion, in individual and above all in social and political life, we can observe how the line of the development of forces deviates from its original direction and goes, after a certain time, in a diametrically opposite direction, *still preserving its former name*.

IN SEARCH OF THE MIRACULOUS, p. 129

I ASK YOU TO BELIEVE NOTHING that you cannot verify for yourself.

VIEWS FROM THE REAL WORLD, p. 78

THE EVOLUTION OF MAN CAN BE TAKEN AS THE DEVELOPMENT IN HIM of those powers and possibilities which never develop by themselves, that is, mechanically. Only this kind of development, only this kind of growth, marks the real evolution of man. There is, and there can be, no other kind of evolution whatever....

In speaking of evolution it is necessary to understand from the outset that no mechanical evolution is possible. The evolution of man is the evolution of his consciousness. *And ‘consciousness’ cannot evolve unconsciously.* The evolution of man is the evolution of his will, and ‘will’ cannot evolve involuntarily. The evolution of man is the evolution of his power of doing, and ‘doing’ cannot be the result of things which ‘happen.’

IN SEARCH OF THE MIRACULOUS, pp. 56, 58

BUT THE BEING OF TWO PEOPLE CAN DIFFER from one another more than the being of a mineral and of an animal. This is exactly what people do not understand. And they do not understand that *knowledge* depends on *being*. Not only do they not understand this latter but they definitely do not wish to understand it. And especially in Western culture it is considered that a man may possess great knowledge, for example he may be an able scientist, make discoveries, advance science, and at the same time he may be, and has a right to be, a petty, egoistic, caviling, mean, envious, vain, naïve, and absent-minded man. It seems to be considered here that a professor must always forget his umbrella everywhere.

IN SEARCH OF THE MIRACULOUS, p. 65

THERE ARE TWO LINES ALONG WHICH MAN'S DEVELOPMENT PROCEEDS, the line of *knowledge* and the line of *being*. In right evolution the line of knowledge and the line of being develop simultaneously, parallel to, and helping one another. But if the line of knowledge gets too far ahead of the line of being, or if the line of being gets ahead of the line of knowledge, man's development goes wrong, and sooner or later it must come to a standstill.

IN SEARCH OF THE MIRACULOUS, p. 64

THE POWER OF CHANGING ONESELF LIES NOT IN THE MIND, but in the body and the feelings. Unfortunately, however, our body and our feelings are so constituted that they don't care a jot about anything so long as they are happy. They live for the moment and their memory is short. The mind alone lives for tomorrow. Each has its own merits. The merit of the mind is that it looks ahead. But it is only the other two that can "do."

VIEWS FROM THE REAL WORLD, p. 222

DURING THE PERIOD OF MY YEAR OF SPECIAL OBSERVATIONS on all of their manifestations and perceptions, I made it categorically clear to myself that although the factors for engendering in their presences the sacred being-impulses of Faith, Hope, and Love are already quite degenerated in the beings of this planet, nevertheless, the factor which ought to engender that being-impulse on which the whole psyche of beings of a three-brained system is in general based, and which impulse exists under the name of Objective-Conscience, is not yet atrophied in them, but remains in their presences almost in its primordial state.

BEELZEBUB'S TALES, p. 359

THE GENERAL PSYCHE OF MAN IN ITS DEFINITIVE FORM is considered to be the result of conformity to these three independent worlds. The first is the outer world—in other words, everything existing outside him, both what he can see and feel as well as what is invisible and intangible for him. The second is the inner world—in other words, all the automatic processes of his nature and the mechanical repercussions

of these processes. The third world is his own world, depending neither upon his “outer world” nor upon his “inner world”; that is to say, it is independent of the caprices of the processes that flow in him as well as of the imperfections in these processes that bring them about. A man who does not possess his own world can never do anything from his own initiative: all his actions “are done” in him. Only he can have his own initiative for perceptions and manifestations in whose common presence there has been formed, in an independent and intentional manner, the totality of factors necessary for the functioning of this third world.

LIFE IS REAL ONLY THEN, WHEN “I AM,” pp. 172–173

ONE OF MAN’S IMPORTANT MISTAKES, one which must be remembered, is his illusion in regard to his I.

Man such as we know him, the ‘man-machine,’ the man who cannot ‘do,’ and with whom and through whom everything ‘happens,’ cannot have a permanent and single I. His I changes as quickly as his thoughts, feelings and moods, and he makes a profound mistake in considering himself always one and the same person; in reality he is *always a different person*, not the one he was a moment ago.

Man has no permanent and unchangeable I. Every thought, every mood, every desire, every sensation, says ‘I.’ And in each case it seems to be taken for granted that this I belongs to the *Whole*, to the whole man, and that a thought, a desire, or an aversion is expressed by this Whole. In actual fact there is no foundation whatsoever for this assumption. Man’s every thought and desire appears and lives quite separately and independently of the Whole. And the Whole never expresses itself, for the simple reason that it exists, as such, only physically as a thing, and in the abstract as a concept. Man has no individual I. But there are, instead, hundreds and thousands of separate small I’s, very often entirely unknown to one another, never coming into contact, or, on the contrary, hostile to each other, mutually exclusive and incompatible. Each minute, each moment, man is saying or thinking, ‘I.’ And each time his I is different. Just now it was a thought, now it is a desire, now a sensation, now another thought, and so on, endlessly. *Man is a plurality.* Man’s name is legion.

IN SEARCH OF THE MIRACULOUS, p. 59

TRY TO UNDERSTAND THAT WHAT YOU USUALLY CALL “I” IS NOT I; there are many “I’s” and each “I” has a different wish. Try to verify this. You wish to change, but which part of you has this wish? Many parts of you want many things, but only one part is real. It will be very useful for you to try to be sincere with yourself. Sincerity is the key which will open the door through which you will see your separate parts, and you will see something quite new. You must go on trying to be sincere. Each day you put on a mask, and you must take it off little by little.

VIEWS FROM THE REAL WORLD, p. 240

FROM MY POINT OF VIEW, HE CAN BE CALLED A REMARKABLE MAN who stands out from those around him by the resourcefulness of his mind, and who knows how to be restrained in the manifestations which proceed from his nature, at the same time conducting himself justly and tolerantly towards the weaknesses of others.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Gurdjieff, G. I.

by Michel de Salzmann

GURDJIEFF, G. I. (1877?–1949), Georgii Ivanovich Gurdzhiev; Greek-Armenian spiritual teacher who remains an enigmatic figure and an increasingly influential force in the contemporary landscape of new religious and psychological teachings. Resembling more the figure of a Zen patriarch or a Socrates than the familiar image of a Christian mystic, Gurdjieff was considered by those who knew him simply as an incomparable “awakener” of men. He brought to the West a comprehensive model of esoteric knowledge and left behind him a school embodying a specific methodology for the development of consciousness.

By the term *consciousness* Gurdjieff understood something far more than mental awareness and functioning. According to him, the capacity for consciousness requires a harmonious blending of the distinctive energies of mind, feeling, and body, and it is this alone that can allow the action within man of those higher influences associated with such traditional notions as *nous*, *buddhi*, or *atman*. From this perspective, man as we find him is actually an unfinished being unconsciously led by his automatic conditioning under the sway of external stimuli. The wide variety of Gurdjieff’s methods may all be understood as instrumental toward realizing self-consciousness and the spiritual attributes of “real man”—that is, will, individuality, and objective knowledge. These methods and his teaching about the evolution of man are implicated in a vast network of cosmological ideas that are spelled out in his own writings and in P. D. Ouspensky’s *In Search of the Miraculous* (New York, 1949).

During his lifetime, notwithstanding the sensationalistic press accounts written about him during the 1920s, Gurdjieff was almost unknown outside his circle of followers. From the 1950s onward, however, his ideas began to spread both through the publication of his own writings and through the testimonies of his pupils. His exceptional personal character, especially his genius for using every circumstance of life as a means for helping his pupils feel the whole truth about themselves, gave rise to numerous misleading accounts that for many years overshadowed the integrity of his ideas. Today, however, the Gurdjieff teaching has emerged out of this background of rumor and innuendo to be recognized as one of the most penetrating spiritual teachings of modern times.

Gurdjieff was born in Alexandropol in the southern Transcaucasian part of Russia. His father was Greek and his mother Armenian. Exceptionally gifted, as a boy he was favored with tutors from the Orthodox church and was precociously schooled for both the priesthood and medicine. Convinced that the thread of perennial esoteric knowledge was somewhere still preserved, he left the academic path to engage himself

in a quest for ultimate answers. For some twenty years (1894–1912) he pursued his search—mostly in Inner Asia and the Middle East—for the core of the ancient traditions. This chapter of his life remains a mystery, although the significant events are recounted in his autobiographical narrative [*Meetings with Remarkable Men*](#).

In 1913 Gurdjieff appeared in Moscow with a fully developed teaching and began to organize around him groups of pupils drawn mainly from the intelligentsia. From then on the outline of his life can be more clearly traced. Both the Russian writer [P. D. Ouspensky](#) and the composer [Thomas de Hartmann](#) describe the continuity of his work throughout the hardships of the Bolshevik Revolution and the journey that brought him and his followers to the Caucasus (1917), then to Constantinople (1920), and finally to Fontainebleau, France, south of Paris, where in 1922 he was able to establish on a firmer basis his [Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man](#) at the Prieuré d'Avon.

The institute's doctrine and experimental methods soon attracted many leading artists and intellectuals from England and the United States, who came to meet Gurdjieff and eventually work with him. Most of them, like Maurice Nicoll, Jane Heap, and Katherine Mansfield, had been introduced to the teaching by [A. R. Orage](#), the noted critic and editor of *The New Age*, and by P. D. Ouspensky.

In early 1924, Gurdjieff made his first visit to the United States, accompanied by a large group of pupils, where, mainly in New York, he gave a series of public performances of his work on sacred dances. His aim was to show the forgotten principles of an objective “science of movements” and to demonstrate its specific role in the work of spiritual development.

In the summer of 1924, after a nearly fatal automobile accident, Gurdjieff decided to reduce the activities of his institute and the circle of his followers, and to secure the legacy of his ideas in written form. By 1934, he had completed the first two series of his writings and part of the third. In the meantime he maintained contact with his older pupils, returned twice to the United States (in 1929 and 1933), and settled definitely in Paris.

In 1935, Gurdjieff resumed his work with groups, assisted by [Jeanne de Salzmann](#), his closest disciple, who was later responsible for the continuation of his work. Although extreme discretion was demanded of his followers, the groups in France expanded continuously, even throughout the war, and included outstanding figures in literature, art, and medicine, such as René Daumal, Kathryn Hulme, and P. L. Travers. After the war, Gurdjieff's international family of pupils again gathered around him. He made his last visit to America in December 1948 and in spite of illness continued his work intensively until his death, in Paris, on 29 October of the following year.

[*Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*](#), first published in English in 1950, is his masterpiece, an unprecedentedly vast and panoramic view of man's entire life on Earth as seen by beings from a distant world. Through a cosmic allegory and under the cloak of discursive anecdotes and provocative linguistic elaborations, it conveys the essentials of Gurdjieff's teaching. *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, published

in 1963, tells the tale of Gurdjieff's youth and his unremitting search for knowledge. Gurdjieff originally intended to complete his trilogy with a final series entitled [*Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am"*](#); the manuscript, however, was never completed, and part of it was lost. The remaining part, raw and fragmentary, was published in 1981. [*Views from the Real World*](#), published in 1973, is a collection of talks given by Gurdjieff and recorded by his pupils in the 1920s. Gurdjieff also left a considerable amount of music, composed in collaboration with Thomas de Hartmann. Some of this music was used to accompany the movements and sacred dances that constituted an essential part of Gurdjieff's teaching and that have been documented and preserved by his pupils.

The specific work and correlative research proposed by Gurdjieff have been carried on and expanded, under the guidance of his pupils, through foundations and societies in most major cities in the Western world. A number of other groups have also appeared, which, though not connected with his pupils, claim to follow Gurdjieff or to have some relation to his teaching.

~ • ~

This essay was previously published in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 16 Volumes, Mircea Eliade, editor in chief, New York: Macmillan, 1987.

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Featured: [Fall 1999 Issue, Vol. III \(1\)](#)

Revision: October 1, 1999

Editorial

A “Teacher of Dancing”

by Ellen Dooling Draper, Guest Editor



In his introductory chapter to *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson*, Gurdjieff identifies himself as:

He who in childhood was called “Tatakh”; in early youth “Darky”; later the “Black Greek”; in middle age, the “Tiger of Turkestan”; and now, not just anybody, but the genuine “Monsieur” or “Mister” Gurdjieff, or the nephew of “Prince Mukransky,” or finally, simply a “Teacher of Dancing.”

The final, seemingly “simple” summation, “a ‘Teacher of Dancing,’” however, is not all that easy to understand. To take it literally is to run the risk of being misled, to think that the Movements might stand alone as an expression of the teaching. The call for “harmonious development” demands attention to the work of all the parts of the human being—in different conditions. The work in movements is one condition; from the beginning, it is clear that other conditions are needed if one wishes a full experience of Gurdjieff’s teaching.

Perhaps here, as in others of his “simple” statements, Gurdjieff has hidden clues to great truths. What is hidden in his “... finally, simply a ‘Teacher of Dancing?’”

In the atmosphere and culture in which Gurdjieff was formed, music, art, and dance were much more in evidence as expressions of the sacred than they are in our times; spiritual tradition was often interwoven into the experience of everyday life. And the expressions of that tradition, transmitted for the most part orally, were in some cases very ancient. Many of them referred to “sacred dance.”

It is said that Shiva danced the world into being, and the Talmud states that the primary function of the angels is to dance, making dancing by humans an expression of thanksgiving for renewal and fruitfulness. Sherpa lamas in Nepal dance to balance the worldly with the divine, and in Zambia, dance serves to mediate between childhood and adulthood. Among the Dogon, it restores order at the moment of death. Turning, either as whirling or moving around a circle, appears in Sufi, early Christian, and Buddhist ritual dances, symbolizing the relationship between the level of the dancer and other, inner, and higher levels of energy and consciousness.

The processes described by these dances—creation, renewal, balance, mediation, order—are expressed in Gurdjieff’s teaching as laws. In *Beelzebub’s Tales*, he speaks of them as the laws of world creation and world maintenance: “Triamazikamno” and “Heptaparaparshinokh.”

These divine processes, governed by law, are also *movement*, which can be understood only partially by the mind, can be only felt in a limited way by the heart, can be only performed incompletely by the body. The centers—alone and separate—are incapable of participating in these processes, are unable to enter into the dance by themselves. But when the three parts come together, there is a completely new possibility, and Gurdjieff’s teaching shows the way towards that unification.

The men and women who came to work in Gurdjieff’s “Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man” were people with deep questions about the sense and meaning of their lives. At the Institute, these questions were given new latitude through their participation in practical tasks, exercises, and “sacred gymnastics”—all under the watchful eye of Gurdjieff. In these rarified conditions, they began to discover a kind of attention unknown to them before, an attention issuing simultaneously from the mind, body, and feeling.

As we have heard from those who were with him, Gurdjieff meted out precisely what was appropriate to each person, according to type and essential need. He could treat someone with tenderness and compassion at one moment, shout at him at another, and at a third, gaze at him without uttering a word. In each case, the person received exactly the shock needed to see how and what he was in that very moment.

Gurdjieff moved through the world and the lives of his pupils, his attention attuned equally to the large picture and the smallest detail. Like a dancer, he appeared in many different guises and performed in a

variety of tempos: searcher, observer, writer, composer, master chef, expedition leader. Each event, an exposition of sacred process and of the human potential to participate in it, was a work of inspired choreography, accomplished by this man who called himself “simply a ‘Teacher of Dancing.’”

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Ellen Dooling Draper is a member of the [Gurdjieff Foundation](#) of New York and a previous editor with Parabola Magazine.



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Part I

Gurdjieff on Movements

Gurdjieff wrote sparingly about movements. The following excerpts taken from *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*, *Meetings with Remarkable Men* and *Views from the Real World* are reprinted by the kind permission of Triangle Editions, Inc.

First Talk in Berlin

November 24, 1921

You ask about the aim of the movements. To each position of the body corresponds a certain inner state and, on the other hand, to each inner state corresponds a certain posture. A man, in his life, has a certain number of habitual postures and he passes from one to another without stopping at those between.

Taking new, unaccustomed postures enables you to observe yourself inside differently from the way you usually do in ordinary conditions. This becomes especially clear when on the command “Stop!” you have to freeze at once. At this command you have to freeze not only externally but also to stop all your inner movements. Muscles that were tense must remain in the same state of tension, and the muscles that were relaxed must remain relaxed. You must make the effort to keep thoughts and feelings as they were, and at the same time to observe yourself.

For instance, you wish to become an actress. Your habitual postures are suited to acting a certain part—for instance, a maid—yet you have to act the part of a countess. A countess has quite different postures. In a good dramatic school you would be taught, say, two hundred postures. For a countess the characteristic postures are, say, postures number 14, 68, 101 and 142. If you know this, when you are on

the stage you have simply to pass from one posture to another, and then however badly you may act you will be a countess all the time. But if you don't know these postures, then even a person who has quite an untrained eye will feel that you are not a countess but a maid.

It is necessary to observe yourself differently than you do in ordinary life. It is necessary to have a different attitude, not the attitude you had till now. You know where your habitual attitudes have led you till now. There is no sense in going on as before, either for you or for me, for I have no desire to work with you if you remain as you are. You want knowledge, but what you have had until today was not knowledge. It was only mechanical collecting of information. It is knowledge not in you but outside you. It has no value. What concern is it of yours that what you know was created at one time by somebody else? You have not created it, therefore it is of small value. You say, for instance, that you know how to set type for newspapers, and you value this in yourself. But now a machine can do that. Combining is not creating.

Everyone has a limited repertoire of habitual postures, and of inner states. She is a painter and you will say, perhaps, that she has her own style. But it is not style, it is limitation. Whatever her pictures may represent, they will always be the same, whether she paints a picture of European life or of the East. I will at once recognize that she, and nobody else, has painted it. An actor who is the same in all his roles—just himself—what kind of an actor is he? Only by accident can he have a role that entirely corresponds to what he is in life.

In general, until today all knowledge has been mechanical as everything else has been mechanical. For example, I look at her with kindness; she at once becomes kindly. If I look at her angrily, she is at once displeased—and not only with me but with her neighbor, and this neighbor with someone else, and so it goes on. She is angry because I have looked at her crossly. She is angry mechanically. But to become angry of her own free will, she cannot. She is a slave to the attitudes of others. And it would not be so bad if all these others were always living beings, but she is also a slave to all things. Any object is stronger than she. It is continuous slavery. Your functions are not yours, but you yourself are the function of what goes on in you.

To new things one must learn to have new attitudes. You see, now everybody is listening in his own way, but a way corresponding to his inner posture. For example, “Starosta” listens with his mind, and you with your feeling; and if all of you were asked to repeat, everyone would repeat in his own way in accordance with his inner state of the moment. One hour passes, someone tells something unpleasant to “Starosta,” while you are given a mathematical problem to solve. “Starosta” will repeat what he heard here colored by his feeling, and you will do it in a logical form.

And all this is because only one center is working—for instance, either mind or feeling. Yet you must learn to listen in a new way. The knowledge you have had up to today is the knowledge of one center—knowledge without understanding. Are there many things you know and at the same time understand? For instance, you know what electricity is, but do you understand it as clearly as you understand that twice two makes four? The latter you understand so clearly that no one can prove to you

the contrary; but with electricity it is different. Today it is explained to you in one way—you believe it. Tomorrow you will be given a different explanation—you will also believe that. But understanding is perception not by one but by not less than two centers. There exists a more complete perception, but for the moment it is enough if you make one center control the other. If one center perceives and the other approves the perception, agrees with it or rejects it, this is understanding. If an argument between centers fails to produce a definite result, it will be half-understanding. Half-understanding is also no good. It is necessary that everything you listen to here, everything you talk about among yourselves elsewhere, should be said or listened to not with one center but with two. Otherwise there will be no right result either for me or for you. For you it will be as before, a mere accumulation of new information.

[Views from the Real World](#), pp. 167–170

As It is with Everything, So It is with Movements

Prieuré, February 9, 1923

As it is with everything, so it is with movements. Movements are performed without the participation of other parts of the organism. Such movements are harmful for the organism. It is useful for its consequences. I emphasize for its consequences. But, for the particular scale to which the organism is accustomed, every movement which exceeds this scale is harmful at first, for a short time. Movements become useful in the future if they are accompanied by proper calculations.

Movements, taken as work, can be divided into the following categories:

1. When one takes the peculiarities of a man's constitution into consideration, both those present now and those which may be likely in the future.
2. When breathing participates in movement.
3. When thought participates in movement.
4. When a man's old, constant, unchangingly characteristic movement takes part.

Only if movements are connected with the things which I have enumerated can they be useful for ordinary, everyday life.

I separate the idea of everyday life from the idea of life connected with work for self-perfection and inner development. By everyday life, I mean a normal, healthy life.

For our work, apart from the four categories I have enumerated, we have to join our normal feelings and sensations with movement, as well as the special feeling and special sensation which we are aiming to acquire. This other sensation should be acquired without destroying the sensations already present.

So there are four conditions.

Thus you see that to make a movement truly useful we must gradually join with it all the above-mentioned other movements of a different category. You must realize that only then can a movement be useful. No result can be expected if even one of the conditions mentioned is lacking.

The easiest of our movements is that crude organic movement which we are able to do (which we have studied already). The movements we have been doing so far are those that all people do, and everyone can do them. And although the movements we shall be doing may look complicated at the first glance, they can easily be done by everyone if they are sufficiently practiced.

However, if we begin to add to these movements one of the conditions I mentioned, it will prove much more difficult and will no longer be possible for everyone. And if we gradually add to it several conditions, such a movement will become possible for only a very limited number of people.

In the end, in order to make a beginning in achieving the aim for the sake of which we began to study movements, it is necessary gradually to join to the movement which proceeds in us the conditions I spoke about.

Now, to begin with, it is essential to pick out the more or less appropriate types. Together with this we shall gradually study and practice the second condition—that is, breathing.

At first we shall be divided into groups; later we shall divide groups themselves, and in this way shall come to individuals.

Views from the Real World, pp. 174–175

Cosmic Laws and Sacred Dance

Imagine that in studying the laws of movement of the celestial bodies, let us say the planets of the solar system, you have constructed a special mechanism for the representation and recording of these laws. In this mechanism every planet is represented by a sphere of appropriate size and is placed at a strictly determined distance from the central sphere, which stands for the sun. You set the mechanism in motion, and all the spheres begin to turn and move in definite paths, reproducing in a lifelike way the laws which

govern their movements. This mechanism reminds you of your knowledge.

In the same way, in the rhythm of certain dances, in the precise movements and combinations of the dancers, certain laws are vividly recalled. Such dances are called sacred. During my journeys in the East, I often saw dances of this kind executed during the performance of sacred rites in some of the ancient temples. These ceremonies are inaccessible, and unknown to Europeans.

Views from the Real World, p. 31
Glimpses of Truth

Questions and Answers on Art

Question: What place do art and creative work occupy in your teaching?

Answer: Present-day art is not necessarily creative. But for us art is not an aim but a means.

Ancient art has a certain inner content. In the past, art served the same purpose as is served today by books—the purpose of preserving and transmitting certain knowledge. In ancient times they did not write books but expressed knowledge in works of art. We shall find many ideas in the ancient art which has reached us, if we know how to read it. Every art was like that then, including music. And people of ancient times looked on art in this way.

You saw our movements and dances. But all you saw was the outer form—beauty, technique. But I do not like the external side you see. For me, art is a means for harmonious development. In everything we do the underlying idea is to do what cannot be done automatically and without thought.

Ordinary gymnastics and dances are mechanical. If our aim is a harmonious development of man, then for us, dances and movements are a means of combining the mind and the feeling with movements of the body and manifesting them together. In all things, we have the aim to develop something which cannot be developed directly or mechanically—which interprets the whole man: mind, body and feeling.

The second purpose of dances is study. Certain movements carry a proof in them, a definite knowledge, or religious and philosophical ideas. In some of them one can even read a recipe for cooking some dish. In many parts of the East the inner content of one or another dance is now almost forgotten, yet people continue to dance it simply from habit.

Thus movements have two aims: study and development.

In the Sarmoung Monastery

While living in Bukhara with his friend Soloviev, Gurdjieff learns about the Sarmoung monastery, somewhere in the heart of Asia and to which he is invited to travel. After a lengthy and perilous journey through the mountains on horseback, during which they are usually blindfolded, he and Soloviev arrive at the monastery and to Gurdjieff's great surprise, he meets his old friend Prince Lubovedsky, whom he finds bedridden and recovering from a serious illness.

As long as Prince Lubovedsky had to keep to his bed, we went to see him in the second court, but when he was better and could leave his cell, he used to come to us, and we talked every day for two or three hours.

So it continued for about two weeks, until one day we were called into the third court, to the sheikh of the monastery, who spoke to us through an interpreter. He appointed as our guide one of the oldest monks, an aged man who looked like an icon and was said by the other brethren to be two hundred and seventy-five years old.

After this we, so to say, entered into the life of the monastery, were allowed access almost everywhere, and began gradually to find out about everything.

In the centre of the third court was a large building like a temple, where twice a day all those who lived in the second and third courts assembled to watch the sacred dances of the priestesses or to hear the sacred music.

When Prince Lubovedsky completely recovered, he went everywhere with us and explained everything, and was thus, as it were, a second guide for us.

The details of everything in this monastery, what it represented, and what was done there and how, I shall perhaps recount at some time in a special book. But meanwhile I find it necessary to describe in as much detail as possible one peculiar apparatus I saw there, the construction of which, when I had more or less grasped its significance, made a tremendous impression on me.

When Prince Lubovedsky had become our second guide, one day on his own initiative he obtained permission to take us to a fourth court, at one side, called the Women's Court, to the class of pupils directed by the priestess-dancers who, as I have said, daily performed sacred dances in the temple.

The prince, well knowing my great and absorbing interest in the laws of movement of the human body and psyche, advised me to pay special attention, while watching this class, to the apparatuses with the aid of which the young candidates for priestess-dancers were taught their art.

The external appearance of these peculiar apparatuses gave the impression, even at the first glance, that they were of very ancient workmanship. They were made of ebony inlaid with ivory and mother-of-pearl. When they were not in use and stood grouped together, they reminded one of 'Vesanelnian' trees, with branches all alike. On close examination, we saw that each apparatus consisted of a smooth column, higher than a man, which was fixed on a tripod. From this column, in seven places, there projected specially designed branches, which in their turn were divided into seven parts of different dimensions, each successive part decreasing in length and width in proportion to its distance from the main column.

Each part or segment of a branch was connected to the adjacent segment by means of two hollow ivory balls, one inside the other. The outer ball did not wholly cover the inner, so that one end of any segment of a branch could be fastened to the inner ball, and the end of the adjacent segment to the outer ball. In this way, these junctures were of the same type as the shoulder-joint of a man and allowed the seven segments of each branch to be moved in any desired direction. On the inner balls certain signs were inscribed.

There were three of these apparatuses in the room and beside each of them stood a little cupboard, filled with square plates of some metal, on which were also certain inscriptions. Prince Lubovedsky explained to us that these plates were copies and that the originals, made of pure gold, were kept by the sheikh. Experts had determined that the plates and the apparatuses themselves were at least four thousand five hundred years old. The prince further explained that, by making the signs on the inner balls correspond to those on the plates, these balls and the segments fastened to them could be placed in certain positions.

When all the balls are placed as designated, the form and extent of the given posture are fully defined, and the young pupils stand for hours before the apparatuses, regulated in this way, and learn to sense and remember this posture.

Many years pass before these young future priestesses are allowed to dance in the temple, where only elderly and experienced priestesses may dance.

Everyone in the monastery knows the alphabet of these postures and when, in the evening in the main hall of the temple, the priestesses perform the dances indicated for the ritual of that day, the brethren may read in these dances one or another truth which men have placed there thousands of years before.

These dances correspond precisely to our books. Just as is now done on paper, so, once, certain information about long past events was recorded in dances and transmitted from century to century to people of subsequent generations. And these dances are called sacred.

Those who are to become priestesses are mostly young girls who by the vow of their parents or for some other reason are consecrated from an early age to the service of God, or of this or that saint. They are given to the temple in childhood, where they are taught and prepared for everything necessary, as for example, for the sacred dances.

When several days after I first saw this class I went to see the performance of the genuine priestesses, I was astounded, not by the sense and meaning contained in their dances, which I did not as yet understand, but by the external precision and exactitude with which they performed them. Neither in Europe, nor in any other place where I have lived and have watched with conscious interest this sort of automatized human manifestation, have I seen anything to compare with this purity of execution.

[Meetings with Remarkable Men](#)

Chapter 'Prince Yuri Lubovedsky', pp. 160–163

The Art of Sacred and Popular Dance

On Thursdays, namely, the days which the learned beings of this group assigned for 'sacred' and 'popular' dances, there were demonstrated with the necessary explanations every possible form of religious and popular dances, either those already existing which they only modified, or quite new ones which they created.

And in order that you should have a better idea and well understand in which way they indicated what they wished in these dances, you must know that the learned beings of this time had already long been aware that every posture and movement of every being in general, in accordance with the same Law of Sevenfoldness, always consists of seven what are called 'mutually-balanced-tensions' arising in seven independent parts of their whole, and that each of these seven parts in their turn consists of seven different what are called 'lines-of-movement,' and each line has seven what are called 'points-of-dynamic-concentration'; and all this that I have just described, being repeated in the same way and in the same sequence but always on a diminishing scale, is actualized in the minutest sizes of the total bodies called 'atoms.'

And so, during their dances, in the movements lawful in their accordance with each other, these learned dancers inserted intentional inexactitudes, also lawful, and in a certain way indicated in them the information and knowledge which they wished to transmit.

Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson

1950 Edition, Chapter 30, 'Art', pp. 475–476

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Featured: [Spring 2002 Issue, Vol. V \(1\)](#)

Revision: April 1, 2002



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Views from the Real World

Early Talks of Gurdjieff

Early talks in Moscow, Essentuki, Tiflis, Berlin, London, Paris, New York, and Chicago as recollected by his pupils. Copyright 1973 by Triangle Editions, Inc. Published in the United States in 1973 by E. P. Dutton & Co. Inc., New York. Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 73-10482, ISBN: 0-525-22870-5. Published simultaneously in Canada by Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, Toronto and Vancouver.

Table of Contents

- Foreword by [Jeanne de Salzmann](#)
- Glimpses of Truth
- “When speaking on different subjects ...”
- “For an exact study, an exact language is needed ...”
- “Man is a plural being ...”
- One-sided development
- “What is the method of the Institute?”
- “Self-observation is very difficult ...”
- “How can we gain attention? ...”
- “Everyone is in great need of one particular exercise ...”
- “Every animal works according to its constitution ...”
- “For one section of the people here, their stay has become completely useless ...”
- Energy-sleep
- “Is there a way of prolonging life? ...”
- The education of children
- Formatory apparatus
- Body, essence and personality
- Essence and personality
- Separation of oneself from oneself
- The stop exercise
- The three powers-economy
- Experiments with breathing

- First talk in Berlin
- “All exercises ... can be divided into seven categories ...”
- “As it is with everything, so it is with movements ...”
- The actor
- Creative art-associations
- Questions and answers on art, etc.
- God the Word
- “Everywhere and always there is affirmation and negation ...”
- “It is impossible to be impartial ...”
- “Everything in the world is material ...”
- Answer to a question about the difference between animate and inanimate
- “Working on oneself is not so difficult as wishing to work ...”
- “To all my questions ...”
- “Now I am sitting here ...”
- The two rivers
- “There are two kinds of love ...”
- “Has free will a place in your teaching? ...”
- Fears-identification
- “Man is subject to many influences ...”
- “Liberation leads to liberation ...”
- [The aphorisms](#)

People Who Hunger and Thirst for Truth

Gurdjieff discusses the obstacles and deceptions faced by anyone in search of inner truth and spiritual guidance. First published in *Views from the Real World: Early Talks of Gurdjieff*, pp. 50–51, 56–58

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Revision: April 1, 2001



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Jeanne de Salzmann

1889–1990

Jeanne de Salzmann studied piano, composition, and orchestral conducting at the Conservatory of Geneva. Dancer and teacher of rhythmic movements, she was a pupil of Emile-Jaques Dalcroze who opened an avant-garde institute of the arts devoted to music, dance, and theater in Germany in 1912. During the Russian revolution, she and her husband Alexandre were living in Tiflis, Georgia, where she opened a school of dance and music. In 1919 the composer Thomas de Hartmann introduced the young couple to Gurdjieff.

In the years that followed, Jeanne de Salzmann became Gurdjieff's devoted pupil, and remained with him until his death in 1949. For more than forty years thereafter, she worked tirelessly to transmit his teaching and to preserve the inner content and meaning of the Movements.

[The Gurdjieff Foundation](#)

The Gurdjieff Foundation is the largest organization that has direct lineage back to Mr. Gurdjieff. The Foundation was organized by Jeanne de Salzmann during the early 1950s and led by her, in cooperation with other direct pupils, until her death in 1990.

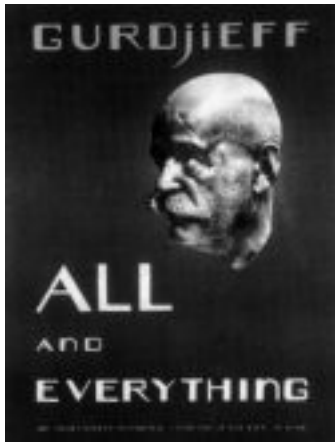
[Threads of Time: Recollections of Jeanne de Salzmann](#)

In this excerpt from his autobiography, *Threads of Time*, Peter Brook—who had attended Jane Heap's group for more than a decade—offers a succinct and vivid cameo of Jeanne de Salzmann who was close to Gurdjieff for thirty years.

[Behind the Visible Movement](#)

Quotations of Jeanne de Salzmann on the subject of Gurdjieff's Movements as recollected by her pupils.

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Revision: May 1, 2002



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

[All and Everything](#)

Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson

An Objectively Impartial Criticism of the Life of Man

All serious followers of Gurdjieff's teaching study this book. This is Gurdjieff's magnum opus. Regarding this series, Gurdjieff said, "*I had decided with the contents of the first series of books to achieve the destruction, in the consciousness and feelings of people, of deep-rooted convictions which in my opinion are false and quite contradictory to reality.*" Gurdjieff's [friendly advice](#) is to read each of his written expositions at least thrice. Further advice is provided from an [excerpt of a talk](#) in which Gurdjieff comments on the relationship between attention and understanding when reading *Beelzebub's Tales*.

Originally written in Russian and Armenian, it has twice been translated into English:

- The [original translation](#) of 1238 pages, first published in 1950 by Harcourt, Brace & Company (New York); Routledge & Kegan Paul (London). Copyright 1950 by G. Gurdjieff. This translation was made under the personal direction of the author, by a group of translators chosen by him and specially trained according to their defined individualities. Later published in 1964 by E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., Library of Congress No. 50-5848. Again published in 1973 by E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc. in paperback (3 volumes), SBN 0-525-47348-3, 0-525-47349-1, 0-525-47350-5. Then published in 1993 by [Two Rivers Press](#). Again published in 1999 by Penguin Arkana, a paperback which contains correction of errata and insertion of two paragraphs omitted from page 568 of Chapter 32 "Hypnotism" in earlier editions.

There is also a *Guide and Index* available for the original translation published in 1971 by [Traditional Studies Press](#), ISBN 0-919608-01-9, copyright Traditional Studies Press 1973.

There's also a [Beelzebub Syllabus](#) available for the original translation printed in 1996.

- A **revised translation** of 1135 pages, first published in 1992 by Arkana, an imprint of Viking Penguin, a division of Penguin Books USA Inc. Copyright Triangle Editions, Inc. 1992, ISBN

0-670-84125-0. This revision was begun on the initiative of Jeanne de Salzmann. The translation team included members of the Gurdjieff Foundation of New York, aided by members of the Gurdjieff Society (London) and the Institut Gurdjieff (Paris), as well as Triangle Editions.

A [Page Correlation Table](#) between the original 1950 and revised 1992 edition is available.

*“Mr. Gurdjieff put everything,
everything he knew in *Beelzebub's Tales*.”*

A. L. Staveley

Reviews

[Gurdjieff's *All and Everything*: a Study by J. G. Bennett](#)

Bennett's study was first published in *Rider's Review* (Autumn 1950), London, and is reprinted here with the kind permission of [Bennett Books](#). Bennett grapples with the contradiction of trying to elucidate a “book that defies verbal analysis” and concludes that *Beelzebub's Tales* is an epoch-making work that represents the first new mythology in 4000 years. He finds in Gurdjieff's ideas regarding time, God's purpose in creating the universe, conscience, and the suffering of God, a synthesis transcending Eastern and Western doctrines about humanity's place in the cosmos.

[The 100 Most Influential Books Ever Written — Chapter 94](#)

Chapter 94 from *The 100 Most Influential Books Ever Written: The History of Thought from Ancient Times to Today* by Martin Seymour-Smith is reproduced in its entirety with the kind permission of Carol Publishing Group. Seymour-Smith points out that Gurdjieff's doctrine is “the most convincing fusion of Eastern and Western thought that has yet been seen...”

[Commentary on *Beelzebub's Tales*](#)

Commentary by Terry Winter Owens and Suzanne D. Smith first issued by University Books in their *Mystic Arts Book News* No. 78 (1964). Reprinted here by kind permission of the authors. “Despite all the inherent difficulties which Gurdjieff has implanted in the book—complexities in writing and in concepts, the rewards are there also. But in keeping with Gurdjieff's philosophy, the rewards are commensurate with the reader's struggle to find them.”

[The Struggle to “Fathom the Gist” of *Beelzebub’s Tales*](#)

An essay from Terry Winter Owens published here first. “For over 30 years, I have wanted to write a follow up to the essay on Gurdjieff’s *All and Everything*, that I wrote in the 1960’s... Writing now from a different perspective, I want to specially focus on Gurdjieff’s ‘friendly advice’ to the reader and some issues that arose from a consideration of that advice.”

[Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson: Commentary by A. L. Staveley](#)

This commentary was first published in 1993 as dust jacket notes for the [Two Rivers Press](#) facsimile reprinting of the English (1950) first edition of *Beelzebub’s Tales* and is reproduced with the kind permission of Two Rivers Press. Mrs. Staveley comments that “This Book is a guide to becoming a real man. Gurdjieff advised us to read, reread and then read this Book again many, many times. Read it aloud with others and read it to yourself. Even if you read it thirty, even fifty times, you will always find something you missed before—a sentence which gives with great precision the answer to a question you have had for years.”

[The Tales Themselves: An Overview](#)

This revised Fourth Chapter of Dr. Anna Challenger’s Ph.D. dissertation from Kent State University (1990) is reproduced with the author’s kind permission and provides a glimpse of the deeply considered understanding each of us must find in our own reading of *Beelzebub’s Tales*.

[Gurdjieff’s Theory of Art](#)

This revised Third Chapter of Dr. Anna Challenger’s Ph.D. dissertation from Kent State University (1990) is published with the author’s kind permission. She provides a thoughtful analysis of Gurdjieff’s ideas of art, particularly as they apply to his writings.

[Beelzebub’s Tales: Fifty Years Later](#)

Denis Saurat visited the Prieuré for a weekend in February 1923 and published a skeptical account in his essay, [A Visit to Gourdyev](#). Saurat later revised his opinion of Gurdjieff and his teaching and came to recognize *Beelzebub’s Tales* as a major work. Written shortly after its publication in 1950, and, as timely today as it was then, Saurat comments on what he regards as the book’s central themes and speculates about its long term impact.

[Beelzebub, a Master Stroke \(Belzébuth, un coup de maître\)](#)

In this penetrating examination of *Beelzebub's Tales*, Rainoird emphasizes that Gurdjieff's master work "cannot be read as we commonly read our books—and which simultaneously attracts and repels us." Rainoird's commentary was first published as *Belzébuth, un coup de maître* in *Monde Nouveau* (Paris) October, 1956 as a review of the publication of the first French edition. This translation is the first to offer the complete text in English.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

[All and Everything](#)

Meetings with Remarkable Men

Regarding this series, Gurdjieff said, "*With the contents of the second series of books to prove that there exist other ways of perceiving reality, and to indicate their direction.*" All serious followers of Gurdjieff's teaching are encouraged to study this book. Gurdjieff's [friendly advice](#) is to read each of his written expositions at least thrice.

First published in the USA 1963 by E. P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 201 Park Ave. South, New York, NY. Copyright 1963 by Editions Janus. Written in Russian, the manuscript of this book was begun in 1927 and revised by the author over a period of many years. The first english translation by A. R. Orage has been revised and reworked from the Russian for this publication.

Table of Contents

- Forward
- Translator's Note
- Introduction
- My Father
- My First Tutor
- Bogachevsky
- Mr. X or Captain Pogossian
- Abram Yelov
- Prince Yuri Lubovedsky
- Ekim Bey
- Piotr Karpenko
- Professor Skridlov
- The Material Question

Meetings with Remarkable Men

Reviews

[Commentary on *Meetings with Remarkable Men*](#)

Commentary by Terry Winter Owens first issued by University Books in their *Mystic Arts Book News Number 82 [1965]*. "It is an adventure of the mind—growing, being formed, setting out after inner knowledge, discovering it and putting it to the test of practice. Thus it is an adventure in two worlds, and it will be the reader's delight and enrichment to discern where one world ends and the other begins."

[Gurdjieff's Self-Revelation: A review of *Meetings with Remarkable Men*](#)

This review of *Meetings with Remarkable Men* by Manuel Rainoird was first published in French in *Critique* (Paris), No. XVI (162), November, 1960, at the same time as publication of Gurdjieff's book in French. In this first English translation, Rainoird's thoughtful observations include both *Meetings with Remarkable Men* and *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

[All and Everything](#)

Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am"

Regarding this series, Gurdjieff said, "*With the contents of the third series of books to share the possibilities which I had discovered of touching reality and, if so desired, even merging with it.*" All serious followers of Gurdjieff's teaching are encouraged to study this book. Gurdjieff's [friendly advice](#) is to read each of his written expositions at least thrice.

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Table of Contents

- *Prefatory Note by V. Anastasieff*
- *Foreward by Jeanne de Salzmann*
- Prologue
- Introduction
- First Talk
- Second Talk
- Third Talk
- Fourth Talk
- Fifth Talk
- The Outer and Inner World of Man

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Gurdjieff

International Review

[Home](#)

[Editor's Note](#)

[Latest Issue](#)

▶ [Past Issues](#)

▶ [His Writings](#)

[His Pupils](#)

[Movements](#)

[The Music](#)

[Group Work](#)

▶ [Books](#)

[About this Site](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Online Store](#)



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April 1, 2002



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Editorial Introduction

The Gurdjieff / de Hartmann Music

Music is just the thing which helps you to see higher.

Thomas de Hartmann

Gurdjieff embodied his teaching in three forms: ideas (both written and oral), movements, and music. Music—at least the experience of great music that has the potential to elevate our awareness and emotional sensitivity—does not translate readily into meaningful words. It is a non-verbal experience that is especially difficult to articulate. The special nature of the Gurdjieff / de Hartmann music makes intelligent, meaningful comment and interpretation even more difficult. Our contributors have each risen to this challenge admirably.

The music articles in this issue would not have been possible without the kind collaboration of: Tom Daly, long-time student of Thomas and Olga de Hartmann and executor of their estate; Laurence Rosenthal, composer, pianist and a leading arranger of the Gurdjieff / de Hartmann music; and Charles Ketcham, conductor and performer of the Gurdjieff / de Hartmann music. All gave generously of their time, attention and materials. Also, courtesy of Mr. Daly, we are very pleased to reproduce three selections of piano music performed by Thomas de Hartmann in audio (MP3) format, our first excursion into this new technology.

An accomplished professional composer, Thomas de Hartmann and wife Olga were close students of Gurdjieff from the early St. Petersburg groups of 1917 until 1930. Thomas de Hartmann collaborated on several hundred musical compositions with Gurdjieff in the 1920s (mostly between 1925 and 1927), sensitively notating and arranging the pieces that Gurdjieff whistled or picked out on the piano with one finger. This issue is specially focused on this musical collaboration and its legacy.

Vastly intelligent, deeply sensitive, ferociously unconventional and blazingly articulate, René Daumal (1908–1944) evokes such superlatives as poet, novelist, philosopher, Sanskrit scholar and student of Hinduism. He worked with Gurdjieff, Jeanne de Salzmänn, and particularly with Alexandre de Salzmänn

in Paris during the 1930s. Daumal is the subject of a new penetrating essay by Basarab Nicolescu and of excerpts from Kathleen F. Rosenblatt's authoritative book, *René Daumal: The Life and Work of a Mystic Guide*. We are grateful to these authors for their informed coverage of this insufficiently known figure.

This issue is dedicated to Thomas de Hartmann and to the patience of all our collaborators.

Walter Driscoll

Greg Loy

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Featured: [Summer 1999 Issue, Vol. II \(4\)](#)

Revision: July 1, 1999

Gurdjieff

International
Review

Home

Editor's Note

Latest Issue

▶ Past Issues

▶ His Writings

His Pupils

Movements

The Music

Group Work

▶ Books

About this Site

Contact Us

Online Store

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ISSN 1524-4784

April 1, 2002

Gurdjieff

International Review

*Summer 1999 Issue, Vol. II No.
4*

The Gurdjieff / de Hartmann Music

[Editorial Introduction](#)

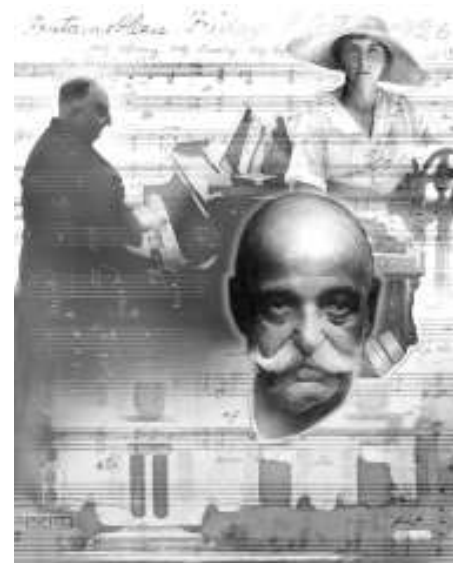
Gurdjieff embodied his teaching in three forms: ideas (both written and oral), movements, and music. An accomplished professional composer, Thomas de Hartmann collaborated on several hundred musical compositions with Gurdjieff in the 1920s. This issue is focused on this music and its legacy.

[On Listening to the Gurdjieff / de Hartmann Music](#)

This anonymous commentary was written for the *Gurdjieff International Review* by a senior member of the Gurdjieff Society in London. For the author “it became apparent that for music to say what it had to say depended as much on the listening as what was listened to.”

[Music: Our Life with Mr Gurdjieff](#)

Written by Thomas and Olga de Hartmann, this account of the musical collaboration between Gurdjieff and Thomas de Hartmann was first published as Chapter 25 of *Our Life with Mr Gurdjieff: Definitive Edition*.



“I had a very difficult and trying time with this music. Mr Gurdjieff sometimes whistled or played on the piano with one finger a very complicated sort of melody—as are all Eastern melodies, although they seem at first to be monotonous. To grasp this melody, to transcribe it in European notation, required a tour de force.”

Thomas de Hartmann

“It is the consistency and objectivity of his [Gurdjieff’s] essential tone that is so compelling. Whether in a delicate dance, a soulful song, or an uncompromisingly stark hymn, one hears always his call to return to and confront one’s inmost being.”

Laurence Rosenthal

“The music is very varied, from folk songs to sacred hymns, and the responses evoked are equally varied, sometimes speaking of the suffering and joy of a human life, sometimes eliciting a strange and

[The Music of Gurdjieff / de Hartmann](#) [Triangle Editions Recordings](#)

Three selections of piano music from the Triangle Editions Recordings, chosen with commentary by Tom Daly, are performed by Thomas de Hartmann and reproduced in audio (MP3) format. In addition to carrying the authority of being the composer's recordings, these evocative performances from the 1950's are unsurpassed in their own right.

[Music Manuscript Sample Page](#) [by Thomas de Hartmann](#)

This first page of *Holy Affirming, Holy Denying, Holy Reconciling* is taken from de Hartmann's music manuscripts. It is also partially reproduced in the Triangle Editions record album and CD notes. Besides showing de Hartmann's elegant music calligraphy, it contains his English handwriting, and connects to expressions used in *Beelzebub's Tales*.

[The Sound of Gurdjieff](#) [by Laurence Rosenthal](#)

This essay was originally published in *Parabola Magazine*, Volume XI (3) 1985, as a review of the four-record album brought out by Triangle Editions in 1985. Reprinted with kind permission of *Parabola* and the author.

[Gurdjieff / de Hartmann Music](#) [for the Piano](#) [Wergo / Schott Recordings](#)

Eugene E. Foster provides an appreciative introduction to the first two of a four volume series of compact discs and printed music being issued by Wergo / Schott Music in Mainz, Germany. When completed, it will form the most comprehensive set of recordings and sheet music available of the Gurdjieff / de Hartmann

quite unfamiliar coloration of the feelings, and sometimes, for me at least, as if conveying a definite knowledge hidden from my ordinary thoughts."

Anonymous

"We had been brought to a level of pondering we had never before experienced. Finally she [Olga de Hartmann] planted a seed that grew inside this silence: 'There is only one important thing—to actually develop our possibilities. We should not be content with anything else, or anything less.'"

Thomas C. Daly

"An object attracts us; we do not attract the object. Objects govern us from outside. They make us do all sorts of things. It is not the woman who buys the hat, but the hat buys the woman. The man does not smoke the cigarette; the cigarette smokes the man, as Mr. Gurdjieff said. The attention and the will generated by outside objects, through the senses, are not our own. They are part of the mechanism of Nature: Nature works us. We do not conquer Nature; Nature conquers us."

Thomas de Hartmann

"In order to awaken you have to think: 'all this agitation is external to me.' You need an act of reflection. But if this act sets off in you new automatisms, in one's memory and one's reasoning process, your voice could continue to maintain that you were still reflecting; but instead you would have again fallen asleep. Thus you can spend

music. Piano performances are by Linda Daniel-Spitz, Charles Ketcham and Laurence Rosenthal.

Gurdjieff and Music
by Laurence Rosenthal

[Sample Only]

The original English version of this essay was first published in *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching*, New York: Continuum, 1996, pages 301–310. Reprinted with kind permission of the author.

Music for the Film *Meetings*
with Remarkable Men
by Laurence Rosenthal

[Sample Only]

This account of the challenges film composer Laurence Rosenthal encountered when selecting and adapting music for Peter Brook's film of Gurdjieff's book was originally circulated as an insert in some of the press packets released with the film in 1978. Updated for this publication, Mr. Rosenthal emphasizes the importance of Russian composer Thomas de Hartmann's music in the film.

On Thomas de Hartmann
by Thomas C. Daly and
Thomas A. G. Daly

On Olga de Hartmann
by Thomas C. Daly and
Thomas A. G. Daly

These two biographical sketches were originally published in *Our Life with Mr Gurdjieff: Definitive Edition*, London: Penguin Arkana, 1992, 277p.

Attention—Wish—Will—Free
Will

entire days without awakening for a single instant. Waking is not a state but an act."

René Daumal

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July 1, 1999

[A Talk by Mr. de Hartmann](#)

Tom Daly read Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous* on its publication in 1949, then had the good fortune to meet and befriend the de Hartmanns while they were living near Montreal in 1951. First published here, he describes the setting and impact of Thomas de Hartmann's 1954 talk to the then fledgling Toronto group.

[A Special Evening at the Essentuki Social Club](#)

[Sample Only]

Tom Daly recounts a day in 1918 when Thomas de Hartmann learned a painful lesson from Mr. Gurdjieff.

Other New Features

[The Strait Gate](#) [by Basarab Nicolescu](#)

First published in *Poésie 99* (78) Paris, June 1999, this essay is translated from the French "La Porte Étroite" by Martha Heyneman for its first English publication here. Nicolescu points out that "It is high time to undertake a serious inquiry into the relation between Daumal's own work and the influence Gurdjieff's teaching had upon him," and calls for the undertaking of such "a detailed study conducted in conformity with all the rules of scholarship." We propose Kathleen Rosenblatt's recent *René Daumal: The Life of a Mystic Guide* as a candidate for this position.

[Daumal with Gurdjieff and the de Salzmanns](#) [by Kathleen F. Rosenblatt](#)

[Sample Only]

The first part of Chapter 9 from Kathleen Rosenblatt's recent book *René Daumal: The*

Life and Work of a Mystic Guide, (1999) New
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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

On Listening to the Gurdjieff / de Hartmann Music

[The following notes were written for the *Gurdjieff International Review* by a senior member of the Gurdjieff Society in London.]

It is now over forty years since I first heard the Gurdjieff / de Hartman music. Someone played me a piece from a record and, although I have no idea which piece it was, the memory of the moment remains quite clear. To start with I was only mildly attracted by it, but then at a certain moment something quite unexpected occurred. I had the impression that a feeling had been touched which I had never experienced before. It only lasted a few seconds and then I found myself again listening with only a slight interest and even a certain boredom.

Over the next few years I heard a great deal of the music, on records, played live and also, in a halting fashion, by playing it myself on piano. The initial sense of contrast was confirmed many times. Often I could make nothing of it, and then, out of the blue, there would be this inner turning which, in spite of my passion for music generally, I had never previously encountered. What was clear was that these moments had nothing to do with my ordinary emotional responses. Quite soon I came also to delight in the music just as music, but this other sound came as it were from a long way off, sometimes hardly heard, but which spoke of a new world.

But this new world was strangely mixed with something familiar. I remember hearing a piece played and saying to myself, “Ah, yes—that piece. Now, what’s it called?” I had a good memory for music and so felt quite frustrated not to be able to put a name on something I knew so well. After a time I realized that in fact I never had, and never could have, heard the piece before.

However the contrast in impressions was quite independent of my familiarity with the piece. I once was playing to myself one of the hymns which I knew very well. As often happened I felt a sort of emotional blank inside. Then, about half way through, with no intention on my part, every note began to resonate inside me. When I finished the piece about three or four minutes later, I was utterly bewildered. As I put it to myself, it was as if I had lived through six months worth of intense and highly varied experiences.

I could not avoid trying to make some sort of sense of all this with my mind. It was beginning to become more and more apparent to me that behind my ordinary emotional responses lay a hidden world of feelings which were quite independent of liking and not liking, of beauty and ugliness. They spoke of something central but apart from me, of what was. The contrast was similar to my responses to nature. I remember once looking at some "beautiful" countryside, saying to myself with a great sense of enjoyment how beautiful it was, and then, suddenly, experiencing its reality. The reality had nothing to do with beauty, was even hard and relentless, but was so much vaster, richer and more alive than the beauty I had been taken by, that, together with the wonder, I felt quite disgusted with the triviality of my moment of enthusiasm.

So, it became apparent that for music to say what it had to say depended as much on the listening as what was listened to. In a way I had always known this. From early on I had been aware of the perpetual inner commentary that relentlessly accompanied my listening, a commentary, both of the mind and the tensions of the physical body, which was shocked into silence only at certain privileged moments. But with this music the contrast was far more marked. One of the titles given to a collection of this music was "Journeys to Inaccessible Places," and there seems no better description for the strange inner travelling I was called to, when available to it. At such moments there was a sense of total "consonance" between the vibrations of sound, a passing phenomenon in a temporal world, and the resonance from a world which has always been.

The music is very varied, from folk songs to sacred hymns, and the responses evoked are equally varied, sometimes speaking of the suffering and joy of a human life, sometimes eliciting a strange and quite unfamiliar coloration of the feelings, and sometimes, for me at least, as if conveying a definite knowledge hidden from my ordinary thoughts. But when I listen tomorrow? I have no idea. If only it simply depended on the music! But it also depends on me.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Music

Our Life with Mr Gurdjieff

by Thomas and Olga de Hartmann

When he was at the [Prieuré](#), Mr Gurdjieff worked with me a great deal on music, but not for Movements. The exercises he showed in August 1924 were the last new Movements he ever gave at the Prieuré. Beginning in July 1925 he began to create another kind of music, which flowed richly from him during the next two years.

I had a very difficult and trying time with this music. Mr Gurdjieff sometimes whistled or played on the piano with one finger a very complicated sort of melody—as are all Eastern melodies, although they seem at first to be monotonous. To grasp this melody, to transcribe it in European notation, required a *tour de force*.

How it was written down is very interesting in itself. It usually happened in the evening, either in the big salon of the château or in the Study House. From my room I usually heard when Mr Gurdjieff began to play and, taking my music paper, I had to rush downstairs. All the people came soon and the music dictation was always in front of everybody.

It was not easy to notate. While listening to him play, I had to scribble down at feverish speed the tortuous shifts and turns of the melody, sometimes a repetition of just two notes. But in what rhythm? How to mark the accentuation? There was no hint of conventional Western metres and tuning. Here was some sort of rhythm of a different nature, other divisions of the flow of melody, which could not be interrupted or divided by bar-lines. And the harmony—the Eastern tonality on which the melody was constructed—could only gradually be guessed.

It is true that Mr Gurdjieff would repeat several sections, but often—to vex me, I think—he would begin to repeat the melody before I had finished writing it, and usually with subtle differences and added embellishments, which drove me to despair. Of course, it must be remembered that this was not only a means of recording his music for posterity, but equally a personal exercise for me to ‘catch’ and ‘grasp’ the essential character, the very *noyau*, or kernel, of the music. And, I might add, this ‘catching the

essence' applied not only to music. For me it was a constant difficulty, a never-ending test.

When the melody was written, Mr Gurdjieff would tap on the lid of the piano a rhythm on which to build the accompaniment, which in the East would be played on some kind of percussion instrument. The entire melody, as given, would somehow have to blend with the background of this rhythm, but without ever being changed or adjusted to fit the accompaniment. And then I had to perform at once what had been given, improvising the harmony as I went.

When I began the work of harmonizing the melodies, I very soon came to understand that no free harmonization was possible. The genuine true character of the music is so typical, so 'itself,' that any alterations would only destroy the absolutely individual inside of every melody.

Once Mr Gurdjieff said to me very sharply, 'It must be done so that every idiot could play it.' But God saved me from taking these words literally and from harmonizing the music as pieces are done for everybody's use. Here at last is one of the examples of his ability to 'entangle' people and to make them find the right way themselves by simultaneous work—in my case, notation of music and at the same time an exercise for catching and collecting everything that would be very easy to lose.

It gradually became Mr Gurdjieff's custom, when he returned from Paris, to work with me on new music notation. After supper, when everyone was gathered together, the most recently harmonized music was played, then the latest text of *Beelzebub* was read, after which music was played again.

Mr Gurdjieff's music had great variety. The most deeply moving was that which he remembered hearing in remote temples during his Asian travels. Listening to this music one was touched to the depth of his being ...

Thomas de Hartmann

Here, unexpectedly, Thomas de Hartmann's writing stopped. He died so suddenly that he had not even read what he had written.

The evening before, he had played with tremendous force his Second Sonata for Piano, dedicated to P. D. Ouspensky's idea of the fourth dimension, for a group of musical friends who would not be able to attend the concert that was to take place in two weeks.

So I was left with an unfinished manuscript, which my husband felt to be very important—as can be seen from his Introduction. In the first chapters he described in detail a period of Mr Gurdjieff's Work from which only I am alive. I felt that my husband's writing should not be left unfinished, but I can continue it only by describing my own experiences.

To be impartial, not too personal and as sincere as possible is a very serious task for me. It

has to be an account of our last years with Mr Gurdjieff as seen through the eyes of one of his pupils. I hope Mr Gurdjieff himself will help me to be unconcerned with other people's judgement of what I write. My veneration of him and of his teaching is profound. So I feel free to say what I judge to be true, subjective as it may be.

Olga de Hartmann

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Revision: July 1, 1999



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

The Music of Gurdjieff / de Hartmann

Thomas de Hartmann, Piano

... Georgi Ivanovich put always a great weight on music. He himself played and he also composed. If we compare it with the music of all the religions, we can see that music plays a great role, a great part, in so to say, religious service. But after the work of Georgi Ivanovich, we can understand it more, we can understand it better, that music helps to concentrate oneself, to bring oneself to an inner state when we can assume the greatest possible emanations. That is why music is just the thing which helps you to see higher. In this regard, I will just play...

Thomas de Hartmann

Of the music he notated and harmonized under Gurdjieff's direction between June of 1925 and May of 1927, the only recordings issued by de Hartmann before he died in 1956 were a set of six 12-inch 78 rpm phonograph records, containing twenty different pieces, all recorded at Bartok Studio in New York City between 1951 and 1953.

Most, if not all, other recordings of his playing this music were taped casually at Madame Ouspensky's farm near Mendham, New Jersey, by her grandson, Lonia Savitsky. Made with neither the intention nor the technology for a public release, they were only for de Hartmann's personal reference. Sometimes the tapes were even made without de Hartmann's knowledge.

In the early 1960s, some of the material on the original 78 rpm records was reissued in long-playing (LP) format (33 1/3 rpm), or rearranged with other new items on discs corresponding to four volumes of sheet music, issued by Janus Press earlier in the 1950s.

All of the above recordings were available only privately and reissued from time to time into the 1970s. In 1985, more extended selections of de Hartmann's recordings were issued to the general public in two

formats: a boxed set of four long-playing records and a set of four audio-cassettes. All the best quality recordings were remastered and improved by the most up-to-date technical methods available at that time. Still later, in 1989, this compilation was re-released on a set of three compact discs (CDs) with additional new material included. The cassette and CD sets are currently available from [Triangle Editions](#).

Despite the informal circumstances and the limited equipment with which they were recorded, these sessions by de Hartmann remain definitive and inspiring performances. Three examples follow. To listen, you will need a sound card, speakers, and MP3 player.



Kurd Melody for Two Flutes

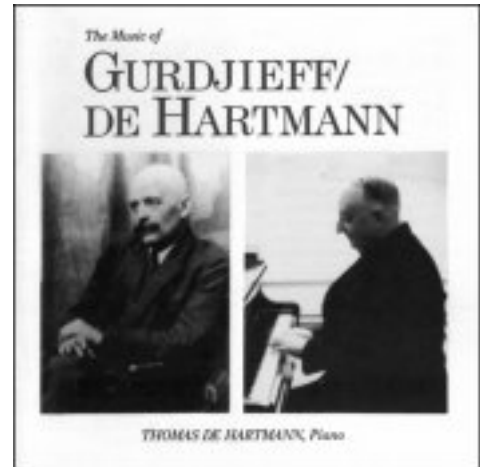
A ‘personal-sized’ piece of work and play by two individuals of an Eastern Culture. We can appreciate their music by listening, but for those who can play the piano, there is much to be learned by enabling our left and right hands to play two different characters in harmony and unison.

Sayyid Song and Dance

The Sayyids in particular, among the sources of music from esoteric schools, are remarkable for their alternation, back and forth, between a vocal or instrumental invocation of higher forces and a rhythmic dance movement to express those forces here below. Gurdjieff’s balance between inner and outer work, though different and quite original also, throws light on such cross-currents of the Truth everywhere. De Hartmann seems to have been touched by a very special presence while playing this one.

Prayer and Despair

Our personal choice was coloured partly by not choosing any hymn from a specific religious source, which might come across to listeners as if Gurdjieff favoured that one religion over others. We also felt that this piece recognizes deeply the dark sides of life that threaten more and more the future of young people today.



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Th. Dellarte "Holy Affirming, Holy Denying, Holy Reconciling transsubstantiate into
my being!" 13 *Saule Affirmation* or
Lento espressivo $\text{♩} = 48$ 13
Fontainebleau, Friday 8 October
1926. D-81(x)

mf *meno marcato*

Senza pedale *ped.* *Senza ped.* *ped.*

p *mf* *p*

Senza pedale *ped.* *Senza pedale* *ped.*

mf *Senza pedale* *ped.*

Con ped.
No. 932 P-4 Sleeve

13 ped très exacte s. v. p.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

The Sound of Gurdjieff

The Music of Gurdjieff / de Hartmann

by Laurence Rosenthal

Although in the past few years various recordings of the music of G. I. Gurdjieff have been issued and are generally available, it may still surprise many who are aware of the Armenian-Greek teacher to learn that he was, in fact, the composer of an impressive number of musical works, mainly for the piano.

Gurdjieff's master-pupil relationship with the Russian composer [Thomas de Hartmann](#) has been affectionately chronicled by de Hartmann and his wife, [Olga](#), but the unusual and surely unique musical collaboration between the two men still remains an uncanny phenomenon, producing a result which would have been patently impossible for either one of them alone.

The sheer volume of work that emerged from this joining of forces attests to the importance which Gurdjieff seems to have attached to music as an element of his teaching, perhaps even as a repository of precise knowledge. His cosmological ideas make extensive use of the language of musical structure and function.

While the earliest and crucially important phase of their collaboration was involved with music for the sacred dances—or Movements, a vital component of Gurdjieff's method—the compositions included in a recently released four-record album, performed by de Hartmann himself, are not related to the Movements, but are pieces of absolute music, albeit with richly evocative titles. These recordings, made in the 1950s under somewhat casual conditions and with amateur tape equipment, sometimes even without de Hartmann's knowledge, have now been reengineered with the most advanced techniques. Considering the modesty of the original effort, the results are remarkably good. What we have is a clean, quiet recording of performances which, without a doubt, set the standard for the interpretation of these deceptively simple pieces. As a pianist, de Hartmann was not only a superb technician, but played with great depth of understanding and poetic sensibility; and then, of course, it was his own music. Unlike, therefore, any other recording of these works, this one gives the sense of the pianist-composer going to the very heart of each phrase. The music emerges in all clarity and integrity; the pianist and his personality disappear entirely from the scene. One cannot ask more from any musical rendering.

The greater part of these works was composed from 1924 through 1926 at [Gurdjieff's Institute in Fontainebleau](#), near Paris. Many of the compositions bear specific dates which indicate periods of a literally daily musical output and suggest the great intensity of the collaborative-creative process, often for weeks at a stretch.

The compositions which comprise the present album have been well chosen, offering a broad view of various aspects of the Gurdjieff / de Hartmann work. There are hymns of a solemn or contemplative nature, quite unlike our usual idea of that form, often drawing from the idiom of the Russian Orthodox liturgy, or else echoing music Gurdjieff remembered hearing in remote Asian temples and monasteries. At the other end of the spectrum are the ingenuous dancelike evocations of simple, ethnic folk melodies. And in between are suggestions of the Near-Eastern improvisation known as the *taksim*; subjective songs of intimate, personal expression in the music of the sayyids, proverbial descendants of Mohammed; melodies of great warmth and humanity rather more in the Western harmonic style, such as the *Bokharian Dervish*, and *Rejoice, Beelzebub*; and, also, excerpts from the score of Gurdjieff's unproduced ballet, *The Struggle of the Magicians*.

Describing the external forms and styles of this music does not, however, help to illuminate its inner essence, which remains strangely enigmatic. What is the source of its compelling force, its ineffable atmosphere, its capacity to cast a spell on the listener while bringing him more intensely into contact with himself?



To begin with, the genesis of these pieces, the method of their composition, is singular, to say the least. De Hartmann has engagingly adumbrated the process, in which Gurdjieff, who could improvise movingly on the harmonium but was in no way a trained composer, would whistle or pick out with one finger on the piano some characteristically Near-Eastern phrase. This and other melodic fragments were somehow assembled and shaped by de Hartmann under Gurdjieff's watchful eye. Harmonies would attach themselves, rhythmic patterns would add momentum, gradually a form would appear. Yet despite de Hartmann's schooled and polished compositional mastery, the influence of Gurdjieff on this "fleshing-out" process seems unquestionable. De Hartmann's own personal style in his numerous orchestral, chamber, and operatic works reflects the transition from an elegant and charming Russian-French neoromanticism into an early 20th-century modernism, peculiarly related to the contemporary cubist and expressionist schools of painting, with an almost naive use of dissonant tone-clusters, a tendency toward mechanistic rhythms, a taste for ironic or sarcastic harmonic configurations.

With very rare exceptions, none of this appears in the music de Hartmann created with Gurdjieff. Occasional dissonances are transformed into something subtle and mysterious; the entire musical stance is a different one. These works seem, in fact, almost devoid of any device designed for effect. They are characterized rather by a directness of feeling and simplicity of structure, even when the ultimate "meaning" is more recondite. The melodies are often oriental in idiom, occasionally even verging on the trite. The harmonic underpinning (a Western adaptation, nonexistent in Eastern music) is mostly triadic or

made of fourths or fifths, or else uses the familiar organ-point or drone. When the harmony is on occasion more complex (de Hartmann's touch, to be sure) it is rarely with intent to weave elaborate chordal progressions, but rather to make more emphatic, pungent, or poignant, some melodic movement. The rhythms are often almost primitively straightforward. One might say this music, whether it is being lyrically introspective, dancelike or prayerful, always feels stripped down, its bones showing. Textures are of minimal interest, embellishments only for the intensification of expression.

On the other hand, in rare instances, the music may seem, for a moment, awkward, ungainly, taking an incomprehensible turn for no apparent reason, as though some subtle intention is eluding us. What feels at first like a mistake leaves us later not so sure. Has de Hartmann deliberately allowed a touch of Gurdjieff's amateurism to remain "uncorrected?" Or, finally, is it absurd to apply here the ordinary academic principles of musical procedure? Is Gurdjieff eschewing also, as he did with the "literary," the "bon ton *musical* language?"

But leaving aside these relatively subtle points, one might guess that the trained listener will very possibly, on first hearing, instantly dismiss this music as typically folkloristic, indigenous to the ethnic and religious crossroads where Gurdjieff was born and spent his early years, and as a characteristic example of the incorporation of such source material into concert works, so common among Russian composers of this period, for whom this style seemed attractively exotic.

But a deeper contact with the Gurdjieff music will quickly show the error in likening it either to traditional folk or religious music itself or to any trivial popularization of it. The similarity is principally one of vocabulary, all on the surface. Gurdjieff obviously used it because it was quite simply the language he knew, and, as it happens, a language rich in a kind of natural, universal, human expression. But his purpose in music went much deeper.

In Gurdjieff's view, most art we know is subjective, both in its creation and its reception. He saw objective art—much rarer—as having a specific relationship to the properties of feeling, as emanating precise vibrations which influence the feelings directly, organically, predictably. Objective art, he said, affects all people in the same way.

Unavoidably we are drawn to ask: Is Gurdjieff's music an example of objective art? Of course it is impossible to say. His various works are clearly on different levels. And yet one may well wonder, for example, when hearing the last composition in this series of records, entitled "Remembrance." Here is the archetype of the essential Gurdjieffian "sound." Anything that could evoke sentiment, nostalgia, charm, or sadness, is nowhere to be found. The music is naked, unadorned, and yet not stark or severe. Instead, a profound searching tone follows the questioning single line, an angular, unpredictable melody that seems to find no resting place, hesitating, feeling its way from moment to moment, supported by a three-voiced harmonic base, likewise elusive, curiously unwilling to resolve itself. And all haunted by a deep, indescribable feeling, as though gazing intently inward, without comment. Objective.

To compare this music with other, more familiar, kinds of music, classic or otherwise, is pointless. Although its materials are utterly simple, recognizable, even conventional, it defies classification. It

seems to have been created with a special aim, a special intent. It is, finally *sui generis*. It makes statements and asks questions not to be found elsewhere.

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[Laurence Rosenthal is a composer and pianist. His symphonic works have been performed by such orchestras as the New York Philharmonic and under conductors such as Leonard Bernstein and Erich Leinsdorf. He adapted the Gurdjieff / de Hartmann [music to the film *Meetings with Remarkable Men*](#) and has composed the scores for many television miniseries including *Mussolini*, *Peter the Great*, *Anastasia*, *The Bourne Identity*, and George Lucas' *Young Indiana Jones*. Mr. Rosenthal has won 7 Emmys.—G.I.R. Eds.]

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Gurdjieff / de Hartmann Music for the Piano

Wergo / Schott Recordings

by Eugene E. Foster

In 1929, when [Thomas de Hartmann](#) and his wife took leave of G. I. Gurdjieff at Gurdjieff's Institute near Paris, they left behind a steamer trunk filled with manuscript music, much of which is recorded here for the first time. The music was composed by Gurdjieff and de Hartmann in a collaboration witnessed daily by the community of Gurdjieff's pupils and documented both in de Hartmann's book *Our Life with Mr Gurdjieff* and in the well-preserved sequence of manuscript drafts. One thing is clear: an exceptional musical event occurred at the [Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man](#) in the years 1925–27, and its enduring result is this body of music.

From the time of its composition until Gurdjieff's death in 1949, this music remained unpublished and was performed, almost exclusively within the circle of Gurdjieff's pupils, by various pianists but principally by de Hartmann himself. Then, in the early 1950s, a selection of pieces was privately published and a series of recordings was made—with amateur equipment—of de Hartmann playing a selection of works from this repertory. Despite their technical limitations, these impromptu recordings have the authority of a composer's performance.

At the time of Gurdjieff's death, he entrusted the continuation of his work to his closest pupil, [Jeanne de Salzmann](#), herself an accomplished pianist, who had witnessed at Gurdjieff's Institute the birth of this repertory. It was a long-standing wish of Mme de Salzmann to see this music published in its entirety, and in this connection she invited [Lord Pentland](#), the President of the Gurdjieff Foundation of New York, to help achieve this aim. In response to her request, Lord Pentland, in 1983, proposed to three musicians, well acquainted with this repertory, Linda Daniel-Spitz, Charles Ketcham, and Laurence Rosenthal, that they assume the task of editing a definitive edition. He brought them together with Thomas C. Daly, the executor of the de Hartmann estate, who had already prepared a meticulous archive of the manuscripts.

Under the guidance of Mme de Salzman, a consortium was beginning to take shape. When Schott Musik International agreed to publish the scores of what evolved into the present four-volume edition, there evolved a plan for a complete parallel recording to accompany the publication and to document a tradition of performance that de Hartmann himself had established. In fact, de Hartmann and Mme de Salzman had worked with certain skilled musicians in New York, as well as in Paris, London, and San Francisco, in search of the most faithful transmission of the essence of this music. In the last decade of her life, Mme de Salzman worked with the three musicians who edited the Schott edition and who perform in this recording.

One must not forget that this is music from a school—not in the familiar sense of a conservatory but in a less familiar sense. Gurdjieff's Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man, where this music was written and first performed, was a school in the ancient sense, comparable perhaps to the circle around Pythagoras: a school whose aim was self-knowledge, and the development of consciousness. The Institute's activities, while reflecting Gurdjieff's broader aims and philosophy, gave to certain forms of music and art a central place in the program of study.

Gurdjieff and de Hartmann jointly brought to the music the most diverse imaginable experience and training. From his childhood in Russian Armenia, a region of ethnic and therefore musical diversity, to his travels across Central Asia as far as Tibet, and in North Africa as far as Abyssinia, Gurdjieff encountered a rich variety of music and dance. He gathered its essential features preserved by countless generations, from simple peasant melodies to sacred chants, and gave them new life in the West. For his part, de Hartmann brought a highly developed musical training and the creative energy that would no doubt have been invested in continuing the Russian tradition in music, had he remained in his homeland—but a promising composer who had been favored by the Czar had no place in Lenin's Russia.

The contributions of Gurdjieff and de Hartmann, overlapping and distinctive, are ultimately inseparable from one another. It is clear that Gurdjieff provided melodies and rhythms, and that de Hartmann provided harmonizations and structural details—but which of the collaborators is responsible, for example, for the haunting dissonances that seem to have a dual debt to Asian microtonal intervals and to early 20th century innovations? Which is responsible for the great hymns (in the third and fourth albums), which are evocative of the Russian Orthodox liturgy yet depart from that model in altogether distinctive ways? Which is responsible for the peasant vigor or poignant innocence of some of the simple, heartfelt melodies, which seem to speak to our subconscious? De Hartmann was well aware of the folklore studies of the Russian school, of the Armenian Komitas Vardapet, of Bartók, Grieg, and others. And Gurdjieff, without formal musical training, revealed, when he played on the harmonium for his pupils, an intuitive sense of melodic form and a deep understanding of sacred music.

The inextricable collaboration of Gurdjieff and de Hartmann is echoed by the collaborative gesture of the three musicians, who have chosen not to document which of them is at the piano for any given piece.



Volume I

Asian Songs and Rhythms

WER 6284-2

The music of *Asian Songs and Rhythms* can be considered as an homage to the peoples of the Near East and Central Asia, and to Gurdjieff's own Armenian and Greek ancestry. The musical folklore of these ethnic groups, among which he lived and traveled as a young man, was a primary influence on his own tonal language.

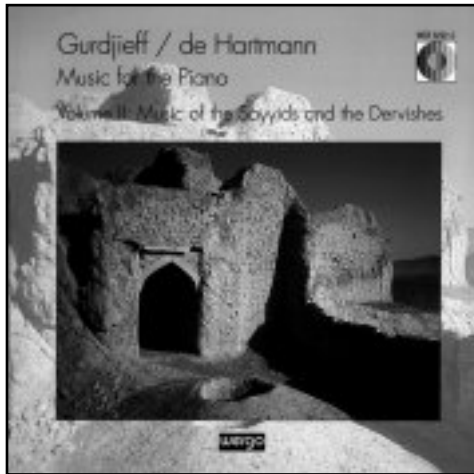
It must be said at once that many of the titles cannot be taken literally. In some cases the music may indeed be an accurate recollection or echo of certain regional melodies Gurdjieff heard on his journeys, which he either quoted directly, or re-created in the idiom of the locale. In other instances, the titles would seem to reflect a personal impression of a place or a people, translated into Gurdjieff's own musical language, or even an evocation of an ancient culture. A number of pieces were left untitled, but clearly belong to the genre of this album.

In any case, there is a remarkable variety of styles within the generally folkloristic idiom. For example, there is a series of Greek pieces found throughout the volume which are largely diatonic, often in straightforward major keys, with a candid, cheerful, almost childlike simplicity. By contrast, the Kurdish pieces tend to be more subjective, soulful, often in minor modes, and even when lively in tempo (No. 19) or with curious dissonances of the ninth (No. 4), still radiate an elusive, underlying sadness. The Armenian pieces have a natural musical directness and human warmth, while the *Persian Song* (No. 6), surely one of the finest of the set, consists of a long, searching melodic line, underpinned by a slow, swaying rhythm and subtly shifting chromatic harmonies which convey an atmosphere of inwardness and mystery which goes far beyond the limits of most conventional folk-music.

As has been mentioned before, this music has a dual debt to both Eastern and Western influences. This is notable in a number of pieces which employ polyrhythms or cross-rhythms. The execution of these cross-rhythms present an interesting challenge to the performer. For example, in No. 11, the left hand plays a recurring rhythmic episode or pattern, while the right hand must execute simultaneously the irregular, contrapuntal rhythm of the melody. This creates a special demand to play two different rhythmic structures at once. As if to emphasize the importance of this contrast, de Hartmann adopted here, and in other pieces, the somewhat unorthodox method of barring only the metric structure of the left hand. The intentional absence of bar lines in the melody serves to emphasize the rhythmic independence of the two

hands, thus creating patterns of contrasting cycles.

Nearly all the pieces in this album are short, sometimes lasting only a minute, often with only one theme, as if trying to illuminate a certain idea or to evoke a particular feeling. In certain instances the repetition of an entire piece is necessary for its essence to be fully conveyed. Each composition is, in a way, a *moment musical*, a kind of “travel sketch,” but with an implication of deeper feeling beneath the surface, waiting to be discovered.



Volume II

Music of the Sayyids and the Dervishes

WER 6292-2

The music of the *Sayyids and Dervishes* occupies a special place in the entire body of works by Gurdjieff and de Hartmann. While these compositions characteristically reflect the musical idiom of the Middle East, one might say that—in contrast to the folkloristic pieces or the sacred hymns and rituals—they reveal a more personal or subjective quality of expression.

The music of the Dervishes still exists today and has been preserved, for the most part, in traditional form. Dervishes belong to different Islamic orders as varied as those in Christianity, in which devotional and spiritual exercises are linked to musical forms defined by tradition. Gurdjieff was, during his travels, in contact with many of these brotherhoods, especially in Central Asia and the Near East, and was undoubtedly influenced by their music. The Mevlevi, for example, best known in the West as the Whirling Dervishes, give an important place to dance, which, along with the music, opens the way to an ecstatic state.

The Dervish pieces are thus often characterized by powerful dance rhythms, full of spiritual fervor (Nos. 14, 27, 36, and 37, for example). But in spite of the forceful expression, the ardor in this music is intensely inward. Dances of this kind are not meant to induce a trance-like frenzy, but, quite to the contrary, provide a specific rhythmic support for the control of the breath and an inner spiritual awakening.

The music of the Sayyids, on the other hand, presents more of a mystery. The Sayyids, whether by blood

relation or spiritual lineage, are considered to be direct descendants of the prophet Mohammed, and are held in great esteem in the Muslim World. But so far as is known they have left no music that can be specifically attributed to them.

In the Sayyid pieces there appears a note of poignancy, a quality of feeling directly from the heart. They often begin with a *taksim*, a free melodic or rhapsodic improvisation based on a particular mode, usually underpinned by a drone or pedal point (represented on the piano by a repeated note or tremolo in the left hand). This improvisatory exposition gradually unfolds the essential melodic character of the composition. The atmosphere is lyric but contained, and reflects the intimacy of a shared experience. This usually gives way to a dance, in a slow or moderate tempo, in which the inward feeling of the opening song is exteriorized into a new sense of rhythmic motion, related more to the movement of the body (Nos. 1, 10, 29, 42). This touching human quality, emotional but utterly devoid of sentimentality, pervades most of these pieces.

The intention of the composers was clearly to evoke the spirit of the Sayyids and Dervishes, rather than to transcribe their music. As in all of the Gurdjieff / de Hartmann works, one finds here their unique blend of Eastern and Western musical idioms. However, the exact sources of inspiration for this music, as so often in many aspects of Gurdjieff's teaching, remain uncertain.

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Volume III: Hymns, Prayers and Rituals (WER 6625-2) is scheduled for release in the fall of 1999.
Volume IV: Hymns from a Great Temple and other Selected Works (WER 6627-2) is scheduled for release in the summer of 2000.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Gurdjieff and Music

by Laurence Rosenthal

That Gurdjieff was a composer of music is in itself a remarkable fact. A spiritual master who, in addition to the main body of his teaching, has created forms of art which can be viewed as essential expressions of that teaching is certainly a rare phenomenon. Gurdjieff's sacred dances, or Movements, and the two hundred or so musical compositions he left attest to the importance he attached both to disciplined bodily movement and to the vibrations of sound in relation to spiritual practice.

Gurdjieff's views on the subject of music, and indeed on art in general, stem from his differentiation between what he terms subjective and objective art. Most of the music we know, he says, is subjective. Only objective music is based on an exact knowledge of the mathematical laws that govern the vibration of sounds and the relationship of tones....

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Music for the Film *Meetings with Remarkable Men*

by Laurence Rosenthal

Very often people come away from a film totally unaware they've heard any music. "Oh! Was there music in that film? I never noticed it, I was so engrossed." And yet all through the film the music was working on them. Music seems to come in through the pores. It enters our unawareness directly.

Every film has its own way of accepting music. Some accept more, others less. Peter Brook's original musical concept for [Meetings with Remarkable Men](#) was surprising to me. The fashionable approach in current films—especially avant-garde films—is toward a sparing use of music, lots of powerful silence. But Peter envisioned the opposite: music pervading the film, music of all kinds and colors, a rich atmosphere of sound to be breathed in and constantly inform the film's changing images. The score that eventually took shape was much nearer to this than to the sparse approach, although of course the crucial dialogue scenes containing essential ideas were all framed in silence....

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

On Thomas de Hartmann

by Thomas C. Daly and Thomas A. G. Daly

... for a long time I have known that our interior world is the soil in which the seeds of art take root. Without this seed in which the magic part of life is hidden and from which a work of art can be born ... there is no Art, there is no Music.

Thomas de Hartmann

Thomas Alexandrovich de Hartmann was born in 1885 on the family estate, which bordered on the village of Khoruzhevka, east of Kiev in the Ukraine. He showed his inclination for music at the age of four and liked to express himself by musical improvisations. Fairy-tales haunted him from his childhood and were to become a recurring theme in his work. Perhaps influenced early by his German great-uncle, Eduard von Hartmann, author of *The Philosophy of the Unconscious*, he had a deep longing for ‘something’ unknown in ordinary life, a longing that never left him.

His early memories were of growing up among cultured people, close to the land and surrounded by the peasants and craftsmen of Old Russia. He was always grateful to have experienced the interdependence of life so close to nature, and to have known the spirit and style of living of the people, so well described, he said, by Chekhov.

This happy base of life continued until he was nine, when the death of his father, who was a captain in the Imperial Household Guards, obliged his mother to enrol him as a boarding student in the military school in St Petersburg from which his father had graduated. There his special talent was soon recognized and he was permitted to spend all his spare time on musical studies.

He was only eleven when Anton Arensky accepted him as a pupil for harmony and composition, and Thomas continued to study with him until Arensky’s death in 1906. It was at Arensky’s that he first met Sergei Taneiev, with whom he later studied counterpoint. He also worked with Anna Esipova-Leschetizky on piano technique.

In 1903 Thomas received his diploma from the St Petersburg conservatory, then under the direction of

Rimsky-Korsakov. In the same year he graduated from military school as a junior Guards officer, with years of active service ahead of him. None the less, he found time to compose and to enter into the musical and theatrical life of St Petersburg. The first notable public performance of his work took place in his graduation year, when he wrote the incidental music for the Imperial Theatre's production of the Dumas tragedy *Caligula*. He also wrote piano preludes and settings for songs of Russian poets, which were published by Jurgenson and Zimmerman.

A year or two later, when Arensky was writing to Taneiev about de Hartmann, he commented:

Take note that at the end of his very first composition, a prelude in A-flat major, published by Jurgenson, there are five or six notes that do not exist on any piano whatever. The keyboard would need to be extended about seven inches to accommodate them. Now he knows his instrument better, and plays it very well, but his attention is still inclined to wander.

Nevertheless, Thomas prospered under Arensky's tutelage. His most striking success was his ballet, *The Scarlet Flower*, premièred in 1907 by the Imperial Opera of St Petersburg in the presence of the Tsar, with Legat, Pavlova, Karsavina, Fokine and Nijinsky in the cast.

In the previous year he had married [Olga Arkadievna de Shumacher](#), and he and his wife were happily surprised when, in recognition of his talent, the Tsar authorized Thomas's release from active service to the status of reserve officer so that he could devote his full time to music. This enabled him to fulfil his great wish to study conducting in Munich with Felix Mottl, a personal pupil of Wagner and musical director of the Opera.

From 1908 to 1912 the de Hartmanns spent the main part of each year in Munich, where Thomas was deeply influenced in new directions:

To my great surprise, I took myself to account and began to realize that all that had attracted me in my youth, all that I had dearly loved in music, no longer satisfied me and was, so to say, outdated.

At that moment, two events took place in Munich, and it was these which left a trace on my artistic path. The first was a great exhibition of paintings by van Gogh, Gauguin and Cézanne, at that time still completely unknown, and the second, soon afterward, was my meeting with the Russian painters Yavlensky, Verevkina and especially Kandinsky, with whom I remained friends until his death.

The intensity and depth of this relationship, and its meaning for his life, is hinted at in a remark about Kandinsky by his wife, Nina, in later years:

As far as I can remember, among all his circle of friends, there was only one whom he ever

addressed by the familiar second person singular, and only one who addressed him likewise: the Russian composer Thomas von Hartmann. Even with his closest painter friend, Paul Klee, Kandinsky, who was revolted by all excessive familiarity, kept always to the formal plural—even after several decades of deep friendship.

In those years in Munich Thomas wrote a choreographic suite, *Daphnis, Narcissus, Orpheus and Dionysus*, which was presented at the Odeon. Also at the Odeon, at Kandinsky's urging, Alexander Sacharoff performed his newly created solo *Danses plastiques* to music written for him by de Hartmann. During his last two years in Munich, Thomas planned and sketched the music for Kandinsky's experimental stage project, *The Yellow Sound*, which did not find a producer before war intervened. He was also an integral part of the avant-garde publication *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider) by Kandinsky and Franz Marc, for which he wrote an article, 'On Anarchy in Music.'

After the death of Thomas's mother, the de Hartmanns returned to St Petersburg in 1912. With a fresh 'palette' of his own, Thomas was busily occupied with new compositions when he met Gurdjieff in December 1916. He recognized at once in Gurdjieff the teacher who could bring him what he had long been searching for, a search shared by his wife. The two of them gave up their life of comfort and luxury to work with Gurdjieff, and followed him wherever life took them for the next twelve years.

In 1929, as with numerous other senior pupils, Gurdjieff made it necessary for the de Hartmanns to leave his [Institute](#) and become completely self-dependent. Thomas made a living writing scores for commercial films under a pseudonym while he continued to compose his own works. He and Olga survived World War II in Garches, near Paris. They lived in a deserted house because the Germans had occupied their own, but a piano was there and, inspired by Verlaine, Proust, and James Joyce, Thomas set their works to music and also worked on his opera, *Esther*.

After the war the de Hartmanns began to have a lively and successful musical life in France, with performances of Thomas's songs, chamber works, concerti and symphonies in concert hall and on radio. They had begun a warm and close friendship with Pablo Casals, which promised many happy exchanges, when another turn of fate uprooted them again. Gurdjieff died on 29 October 1949. The decision was taken with [Jeanne de Salzmann](#) that the de Hartmanns would move to America to support the Work there.

The last few years of Thomas's life were based mainly in New York. He organized the first private publications of selections from the Gurdjieff / de Hartmann music and also issued a number of records of it played by himself. The work with the groups did not slow his personal creative activities. An invitation from Frank Lloyd Wright brought Thomas to Wright's architectural school in Arizona, where he lectured to the students on the interrelatedness of the arts. His orchestral music was performed in several North American cities, and in New York he played his own sonatas on the radio. He died unexpectedly in 1956, a few days before an important concert of his music in Town Hall. The concert was not cancelled and, fittingly, celebrated his music and his life *in memoriam*.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

On Olga de Hartmann

by Thomas C. Daly and Thomas A. G. Daly

We were married in church with all the fuss of the time. The sister of the Tsar was present and the church was filled with Guards officers and high dignitaries. My vanity and pride helped me to choose the most handsome and tall best man so as not to spoil my hair when he held the crown above my head, which was the custom, and to be careful not to step on my very long train.

Olga de Hartmann

Olga Arkadievna de Hartmann was born Olga de Shumacher on 28 August 1885 in St Petersburg, where her father was a high government official. Both her parents were of German ancestry and the Lutheran faith, in the Russian capital, where the Court officially spoke French and the state religion was Russian Orthodox. From childhood until her marriage, Olga had a German nurse and a French governess, and by the time she was six she could speak and read Russian, German and French. She recalled:

From an early age, I always had a religious feeling. When I was seven, all the other children in our school were Russian Orthodox, but my brother and sisters and I had our religious lessons in German separately from the others. One day my mother told us sorrowfully that from now on a Russian priest had to teach us Holy Scripture in Russian, but I was unwilling for us to be separated in this way from my parents, so they finally decided to become Russian Orthodox also.

Although her parents led a very active social life in high society, they gave a great deal of attention to the children. At the age of twelve Olga liked to play chess with her father when he came home from work. In their spacious apartment one whole room was a library, with books from floor to ceiling. There, in the evenings, her father would read aloud to them from Russian literature and, sometimes, from Goethe and Schiller in German. The family always spent the summer together in a property they had in Finland, inherited from their mother's uncle, who had been a great traveller.

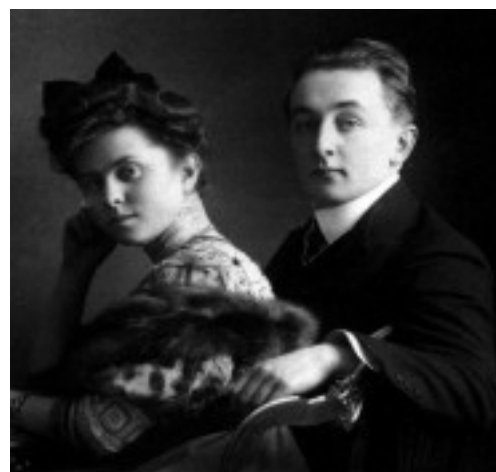
As they grew up, Olga's mother gave parties for the children and all their young friends. During these

they played charades, danced, and improvised plays and operas. Their parents also took them often to the theatre and concerts, and to all the premières of operas and ballets.

It was during the intermission at a concert featuring [Thomas de Hartmann](#)'s music that Olga was first introduced to him. 'I had a funny feeling when I met him,' she wrote, 'as if I knew him from long ago.' In fact, the threads of connection stretched further than she knew at that time. During the reign of Tsar Alexander II there was a special commission in the government to organize the liberation of the serfs. The senior senator, who replaced the Tsar at meetings in his absence, was Olga's grandfather. Serving on the same commission was the General Secretary of the government, the grandfather of her future husband.

From the time of their marriage, Olga shared in all her husband's activities. In the summer they now went to Thomas's family estate in the Ukraine, where two of the younger servants—children of older family servants—became their personal attendants and returned with them to St Petersburg, Marfousha as cook and lady's maid, and Osip as butler.

Olga and Thomas became the closest of friends with Sergei Taneiev, the great teacher of counterpoint. Olga had a lovely natural voice, and Taneiev advised her to take singing lessons from B. Curelli in Italy, which was arranged while she and Thomas were living in Munich and for which they went to Naples for several months. Later, when Taneiev's opera trilogy *Oresteia* was being produced in Moscow, Olga sang a leading part. She also took lessons from the concert singer Zoë Lody in the repertoire of arias from *Rigoletto*, *Lakmé*, *La Traviata* and *Madame Butterfly*, and in a benefit performance of the Imperial Opera she was chosen to sing Violetta in *La Traviata*.



It was in Munich that the de Hartmanns began to be interested in esoteric questions. Olga wrote:

At that time everyone was reading Blavatsky. One evening, with Kandinsky and some others, we decided to try running a plate with an arrow on it around the German alphabet, like a modern-day Ouija board. We asked it questions, expecting the plate to stop on letters which I had to write down and afterwards decipher. But nothing meaningful was spelled out. Someone suggested trying in Russian. Again we asked questions, and at once it became quite thrilling. A ghost told us her name, Musutsky, and that she had lived in the town of Ufa, near the border of Siberia, and was buried there. She asked us to pray for her and said that a cousin of hers—she began to spell his name: S—h—a—, but here she was interrupted and got no further.

Kandinsky decided to write to the priest in Ufa and ask him if he knew of anyone by the name she had given. In a month's time he had the priest's answer: there were among his

parishioners many Musutskys, but there was only one with a relative by the name of Shatov. We were really astonished.

The de Hartmanns began to look for some interesting and knowledgeable person to throw light on their questions, and they continued their search when they returned to St Petersburg. There they encountered various dubious groups, in one of which the leader sought to control the members by hypnotizing them. Thomas and Olga quickly left, together with another member of the group, Andrei Zakharov, who became their close friend.

When war mobilization stationed the de Hartmanns at Tsarskoye Selo, Olga was alone all day while Thomas was on military duty. With a friend, she occupied her time by organizing and equipping a building there as a residence and school for some sixty boys, aged ten to fifteen, whose fathers were also reserve soldiers. A benefit concert, assisted by people from the Imperial Opera, helped her to finance this project. It was at this time that Thomas was talking privately with Zakharov and meeting Gurdjieff for the first time. Their book [[Our Life with Mr Gurdjieff](#)] picks up the story.

The last chapter tells what she chose to write about the rest of their life together until Gurdjieff died in 1949. After her husband died in 1956, she continued tirelessly in her efforts to help supervise and support the development of Gurdjieff's Work in North America. As time allowed, she also promoted performances of her husband's orchestral and piano works, culminating in an oratorio-style presentation of his opera *Esther* at Syracuse, New York, in 1976.

In later years, for health reasons, she moved to Nambe, near Santa Fe in New Mexico, where she died in 1979.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Attention—Wish—Will—Free Will

A Talk by Mr. de Hartmann

From the Diary Notes of Thomas C. Daly

In June, 1954, the de Hartmanns made a special visit to their newly constituted Toronto Group, to give a clear direction to our Work. On the evening of June 11, all the members met again in my parents' apartment, where we had originally begun as a "provisional" group two years before.

Expectancy was in the air. During the first hour, while Mr. de Hartmann gave a music lesson to someone else at a nearby hotel, Madame de Hartmann questioned each and all of us together, especially deeply: "Why are you here?—What is your aim?—And what do you wish?"

Typical answers: "To be free from ups and downs" ... "To get rid of negative emotions" ... "To become something real" ...

To each answer she countered with: "Yes, but why? Why do you want that?—One can want all such things just to be approved of by others, just to get on better in life—but why do you want that? ..."

By the end of the hour, our minds were empty of answers. We had been brought to a level of pondering we had never before experienced. Finally she planted a seed that grew inside this silence: "There is only one important thing—to actually develop our possibilities. We should not be content with anything else, or anything less."

Into this atmosphere at last came Mr. de Hartmann, and it became apparent that, instead of a reading as we usually had, de Hartmann himself was going to speak to us directly from his own experience. And he began to speak without notes and straight from the heart.

First he underlined four themes: "Attention—Wish—Will—Free Will." And then he proceeded to relate them to each other. In that atmosphere of openness, his clarity, breadth of thought and obvious wish for

our own understanding penetrated so deeply that afterward I felt I remembered it almost word for word, and wrote it down as follows:

How do we perceive an object? Why that one object, out of so many? Something connects us with that one object, and not with others. It attracts our attention. We pay attention to it. It attracts our attention through one of our senses: our eye, ear, nose, and so on. Our eye, ear or nose pays out attention to the object.

Our wishes, our desires, are connected with it in some way. We want to have it; or we want to avoid it; or we want to look at it more than we want to look at any other object.

This morning I saw a dog with two small boys. Its whole attention was glued to its two masters, watching to see what they would do, which way they would go, so he could quickly follow and be with them. He had attention for nothing else. And his attention continued to be concentrated on the two boys as long as I watched. This is already a high degree of attention, even if it is only animal attention—much stronger than many humans have.

Now we come to wish. Wish is only, as it were, a mere point in space. If we only wish for an object, we will never have it. In order to possess it, we must begin to move toward it. This movement is the beginning of will. If wish is a “point,” this kind of will generates a “line,” moving toward the object, with a view to possessing it, or identifying with it.

At every level of the universe there are degrees of will. The iron and lodestone: purely mechanical will—yet it moves towards its goal. The caterpillar moves along towards the leaf it wants to eat. The dog: sometimes a dog so strongly wishes to be with his master that when the master dies the dog will sit by his grave and never eat or leave there till he dies himself. This is already a very high degree of will—even if only an animal’s will. Few humans attain it.

Thus there is an attention, and a will, for outside objects. An object attracts us; we do not attract the object. Objects govern us from outside. They make us do all sorts of things. It is not the woman who buys the hat, but the hat buys the woman. The man does not smoke the cigarette; the cigarette smokes the man, as Mr. Gurdjieff said. The attention and the will generated by outside objects, through the senses, are not our own. They are part of the mechanism of Nature: Nature works us. We do not conquer Nature; Nature conquers us. The attention and the will connected with the physical senses and outside objects are not our own. This will is not free, but answers the call of every outside object.

But there is another Attention, and another Will. Man has two natures: a lower, and a higher. The lower nature is like an animal’s—more subtle and complex, perhaps, but nevertheless it works in the same way. The higher nature is the real one. It is incomplete,

but capable of growing into a full and complete Man.

For the higher nature, there is another Attention, and another Will, not born outside of us, but born in us. This Attention is the beginning of real Consciousness; and this Will is the beginning of Free Will. With this Attention, we can observe ourselves; with this Attention we can remember ourselves. With this Will, we can make efforts to attain our greatest aim: to complete ourselves.

But we must actually will it. Knowledge is not enough. It is good, and necessary, of course, but of itself it will change nothing in us. Understanding is necessary. We must have new knowledge: for instance, in order to know what can be wished. But unless we actually wish it, we will have no chance of obtaining anything. And wishing alone, is also not enough. We can wish forever, but unless we move toward what we wish we will never obtain it. We must will it.

But we do not have enough Will. And we do not have enough Attention. So we must increase them as best we may. And the only way to increase them is to make the right kind of efforts. Without efforts, nothing can increase. But if we turn all our Attention, all our Will, and all our Efforts, towards our big Aim, little by little, like the caterpillar, we will approach it: the big Aim.

Later, verified with Madame de Hartmann, who made a single small addition as printed above.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

**A Special Evening
at the Essentuki Social Club
From the Notes of Thomas C. Daly**

[Thomas de Hartmann](#) was never one to trumpet his own importance. He never pushed himself forward as some others did. His level of self-integrity has become more and more evident as time goes by. On the way to self-development he has not stinted to record his own essence weaknesses, and how Gurdjieff worked on them to help him overcome them through real suffering of a positive kind, as evidenced by incidents throughout his story. The “special evening” in Essentuki at the social club comes to mind as an example:...

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

The Strait Gate

La Porte Étroite

by Basarab Nicolescu

[René Daumal](#) was a born Seeker of the Truth. His whole life and all his works give ample proof of that. He devoted himself totally, with all his being, to his search. *Le Grand Jeu* was only one stop on his journey. Daumal was a rebel from the start. One has only to read *Poème à Dieu et à l'Homme*, *Les clavicules d'un grand jeu poétique*, or *L'asphyxie et l'évidence absurde*, to understand what he was rebelling against—to see his experience of the absurd and his perception of the ego (le “moi”) as a vicious circle. Later, in *L'envers de la tête*, Daumal writes:

... the most serious thing, and the strangest, is that we are afraid to the point of panic, not so much of seeing ourselves as of being seen by ourselves. This is our root absurdity. What is behind this great fear? ... We are afraid that if we see ourselves we will not see anything very great. Our humbug self is afraid of being seen for what it is. It is fear of this awful exposure that makes us cover ourselves with makeup and put on phony facial expressions.

By 1930 Daumal was burned out. He had searched and searched and found nothing. His health was already affected by experiments that were essential but destructive. His disappointment was immense, because the only way out he could see was the dead end of negation under the sign of “the great female vampire Death, the tramp of all the ages, Lilith the Frigid.” His *Nerval le nyctalope* is in my opinion the text that best sums up his quest before 1930. It was not an annihilation but a preparation. Paradoxically, when a man is truly burned out, he no longer looks for a way. The way finds him. This is precisely what happened through René Daumal's apparently miraculous encounter, by way of Joseph Sima¹, with [Alexandre de Salzmann](#), an event that marks the boundary between the burned-out man and the fulfilled one. “I have met a human being. I didn't think it was possible. Just the same, I have had to sacrifice some very comfortable despairs. Hope is what is hard to bear,” Daumal writes in *La vie des Basiles*. By one of those astonishing coincidences of which life possesses the secret, Katherine Mansfield, another writer in search of meaning, had encountered this same Alexandre de Salzmann eight years earlier at the Prieuré d'Avon, where she had wanted to spend the last years of her life. In a letter of December 9, 1922, addressed to her husband, John Middleton Murry, Katherine Mansfield tells of a conversation about

“poverty of the spirit” which had struck her very much: “To be poor in ideas, in imagination, in impulses, in desires—in short, to be simple.”² This simplicity is what would suit burned-out beings like Katherine Mansfield and René Daumal.

In spite of what people have managed to write carelessly here and there, Alexandre de Salzmann was neither an alarming, peculiar being nor an unknown. Friend of Kandinsky and of Rilke, member of the *Jugendstil* group, Alexandre de Salzmann was a remarkable painter and a recognized *metteur en scène*, inventor of a new lighting technique that is still in use today.³ In 1922, on the occasion of the production of *Pelléas et Mélisande* at the Théâtre des Champs Élysées, a periodical called *Choses de théâtre* hailed Alexandre de Salzmann as “one of the most remarkable contrivers of technical innovation.”⁴ For Daumal he was a go-between. Thanks to him Daumal discovered Gurdjieff’s teaching. Gurdjieff’s teaching was in turn the medium of Daumal’s truly life-determining experience: his encounter with himself, as a being and as an artist.

Fashionable Parisian opinion, lazy and careless, feeding on nothing but rumors, tried to spread an idea that still hangs on today; that Daumal’s involvement with this way is only a deplorable aberration that happily does not affect his work in any respect. The senseless rumors about Gurdjieff as a person were nourished by a single book, *Monsieur Gurdjieff*, a best-seller by Louis Pauwels published in 1954 and written in the style of a casual journalist who cared nothing for documentary rigor and knew Gurdjieff only from afar, from very far, in the corridors of the rue des Colonels Renard. A recent monograph⁵ reveals another Gurdjieff altogether, and all the living interest of his thought.

Fifty years after Gurdjieff’s death, and fifty-five after Daumal’s, the rumors are dying down. It is high time to undertake a serious inquiry into the relation between Daumal’s own work and the influence Gurdjieff’s teaching had upon him. The broad outlines of such an inquiry have already been sketched by Michel Random, Jean Biès, and Michel Camus. I cannot but share Michel Camus’s opinion: “One cannot confine Daumal within Gurdjieff’s teaching. No more can one separate him from a work of self-transformation that shaped the second half of his life.”⁶

In these brief notes, until we have a detailed study conducted in conformity with all the rules of scholarship—a desirable and necessary work that an inquirer of the coming century might accomplish—I can only sketch out my own thesis: Daumal was in search of a true science, a science that includes being. This is the science he found in Gurdjieff’s teaching. The ideas and practice of the Gurdjieff teaching, as well as his own literary and philosophical knowledge, came to be fused with his being. In this way his work was fertilized by poetic alchemy.

This assertion about science may surprise the reader who is only slightly acquainted with Daumal’s works. It is not, of course, a question of science in its technical aspects, but rather of the scientific spirit, which is probably the most important contribution modern science has made to the culture of our era.

A being as rigorous as René Daumal, who only believed what he could verify for himself and invested each of his activities with the strictest demands, could not fail to consult scientific knowledge. Many of

Daumal's writings do, in fact, make reference to science. The poet held it in high esteem as the only possible foundation for a modern mythology. In *Les limites du langage philosophique* (1935) Daumal, rising up against verbal philosophies taken as ends in themselves, writes:

... traditional knowledge should always be built on the foundation of a collective myth wedded to institutions and sustained by nature and the community of concrete relationships. At the present time the only thing I see that tends to answer to this definition is scientific knowledge wedded to technological development and modern economic evolution.... Maybe this is the foundation upon which a new culture could be built.

Later, in an important letter of 1943 that is curiously omitted from the third volume of his correspondence edited by Gallimard, Daumal declares that science "is less corrupted than philosophy, art, or religion."⁷ At the same time, Daumal sees very clearly what is lacking in contemporary science. In the same 1943 letter he writes:

The error lies in disconnection from the source, and hence from the sister branches of knowledge, and this doctrinal disconnection finds its reflection in the psychological disconnection one notices only too often in the scientist as an individual. While the scientific mind is progressing toward its destiny, the scientist's mind is usually very disappointing.

In *Sur le scientisme et la révolution* he states his thought precisely: "... they were offering us a 'knowledge of man' that turned out to be nothing but the sum of fragmentary information provided by the sundry scientific disciplines—a knowledge unworthy of the name." It is "edification of being" that interests Daumal, and not "dead theories." Thus the central importance he accords to education. And it is precisely this edification of being that he finds as a practical path in Gurdjieff's teaching, as he himself explicitly states in *Le mouvement dans l'éducation intégrale de l'homme*, *Lettre de Paris*, *La vie des Basiles*, and in *Têtes fatiguées*.

One of the central ideas in Gurdjieff's cosmology is that the inner universe and the outer universe are interdependent. They sustain each other. Consideration of the one without the other amounts to a mutilation of knowledge. An idea like this, incarnated in the practice of Gurdjieff's teaching, could not but attract René Daumal. He already had a presentiment of this true science in *Clavicules d'un grand jeu poétique*: "Science should be based on the same strict necessity. The progress of true science lies in its gradual extension to the objects of the kind of knowledge by which the subject perceives himself." Gurdjieff's teaching was in fact the culmination of *Le Grand Jeu*, because it actually puts the Great Game of being into play.

Daumal is not interested in "the ghost of truth" but in truth itself. He scorns "the vacant place of unity." He wants to realize unity itself. "The highest art is created by the man who has attained to being and unity," Daumal said to Lanza del Vasto in their *Dialogue on Style*. He is looking for the "seed" from which the light is born, the silence that allows the *Thing-to-be-said itself* to be expressed, and this "then

appears at the inmost core of oneself as a timeless certainty—known, recognized, and hoped for at the same time—a luminous point containing the immensity of the longing to be” (*Poésie noire, poésie blanche*). He wants to experience that sound, taste, savor of oneself that is a “moment of consciousness” (*Pour approcher l’art poétique hindou*).

So what was he really looking for in Gurdjieff’s teaching? Is it possible to answer such a question? I will take the risk of answering: *In it Daumal was seeking the incarnation of la poésie blanche*, which Michel Camus calls, in the context of today, ‘transpoetry’ (‘transpoésie’),⁸ a poetry beyond all poetry and all language but nevertheless expressed through the resources of art—life as poetic exercise, the life of consciousness in the midst of life itself, here and now.

There remains the problem of bearing witness. “Should I never speak of the Unknowable because that would be a lie? Should I speak of the Unknowable because I know that I come from it and I am bound to bear witness to it?”—Daumal asks himself in *Réponses aux questions de Luc Dietrich*. René Daumal chose to bear witness through his whole oeuvre and above all in two astonishing works which are read but not recognized for what they are: *La grande beuverie [A Night of Serious Drinking]* and *Le mont analogue [Mount Analogue]*, two books that will help us live our lives in the century now at our door.

Notes and References

Author’s Note: All the quotations from Daumal are found in *Chaque fois que l’aube paraît*, Paris: Gallimard, 1953; “L’évidence absurde,” *Essais et Notes, I (1926–1934)*; and “Les pouvoirs de la parole,” *Essais et Notes, II (1935–1943)*, Paris: Gallimard, 1972. To avoid burdening the text, they are not indicated as separate references.

¹ Michel Random, *Le Grand Jeu*, 2 volumes, Paris: Denoël, 1970.

² Katherine Mansfield, *Katherine Mansfield’s Letters to John Middleton Murry, 1913–1922*, London: Constable, 1951.

³ Alexandre de Salzmann, *Notes from the Theatre*, San Francisco: Far West Press, 1972; “Light, Lighting and Illumination,” *Material for Thought*, No. 4, San Francisco: Far West Press, Summer 1972, pp. 22–24.

⁴ H.-R. Lenormand, *Pelléas et Mélisande* au Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, *Choses de Théâtre*, No. 4, Paris: January 1922.

⁵ Bruno de Panafieu, comp., *Georges Ivanovitch Gurdjieff, L’Age d’Homme, les dossiers H*, Lausanne: 1992; English translation: *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching*, New York: Continuum, 1996, English version edited by Jacob Needleman and George Baker.

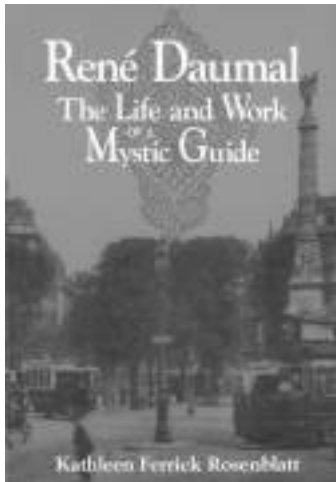
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⁷ Letter to Geneviève Lief of September 3, 1943, *Cahiers Daumal*, No. 2, Cairo: Ganéscha et Société des Amis de René Daumal, 1988.

⁸ Michel Camus, *The Paradigm of Transpoetry*, text available in French, English, and Portuguese on the

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Daumal with Gurdjieff and the de Salzmanns

Finding a Path

by Kathleen Rosenblatt

“A Man will renounce any pleasure you like but he will not give up his suffering.”

G. I. Gurdjieff

In October of 1930, [René Daumal](#) and his friends began to notice a tall, solitary man who had recently begun to frequent their haunt, the Café Figon on the Boulevard St. Germain, where they convened every Thursday following their meeting at the artist Joseph Sima’s studio. This gentleman would always sit in a corner of the terrace, drinking many glasses of calvados and endlessly drawing curious Arab and Chinese characters. Finally, in early November, Joseph Sima recognized [Alexandre de Salzmann](#) from an earlier collaboration at the publishers Pégase in 1923. He presented the legendary artist to his young friends. According to Georgette Camille, a contributor to *Le Grand Jeu*, de Salzmann approached them on another occasion. After conversing a while, he asked those at the table to try something: to hold their arms straight out to the side for as long as they could. Minutes later, Daumal was the only one with arms still outstretched, and de Salzmann said, “You interest me!”¹ As it turned out de Salzmann was a pupil of G. I. Gurdjieff, and these encounters were one of those fated “coincidences” dear to the Surrealists. It was a major turning point in the twenty-one-year-old Daumal’s life. Jacques Masui writes in his article “René Daumal et l’expérience Gurdjieff” that “Daumal was not content merely to accept the Gurdjieff teaching; he gave himself over to it.”²

Who was Gurdjieff the man and what was the teaching that so intrigued Daumal? According to those who knew him, he was a powerfully spiritual, enigmatic, unpredictable scientist of the soul. The late P. L. Travers, author of *Mary Poppins*, described the effect Gurdjieff had on his followers:

His mere presence gave out energy. To receive his glance was to receive a moment of truth that was often very hard to bear. A master like Gurdjieff is not someone who teaches this

or that idea. He embodies it himself.... I think I saw in him what every true master has: a certain sacrificial quality as though he clearly had come for others.³

In this chapter, we will give a brief overview of the history and teaching of Gurdjieff directly, and then examine the same concepts through the public and private writings of Daumal. In addition, we will open the door a second time to Daumal's last fourteen years of life, viewing them through this new lens—his association with the Gurdjieff phenomenon....

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[Big Sur Tapes](#)

A source of tapes on Sufis, Gurdjieff, the Enneagram, and a wide range of human potential material.

[Bridge Press](#)

A small publisher on Staten Island, New York who has republished *The Butterfly: A Symbol of Conscious Evolution* (1996) by Daly King with an introduction by Terry Winter Owens.

[By The Way Books](#)

Sell, buy, or trade books related to mysticism, philosophy, religion/theology, classics, Gurdjieff, Ouspensky and the Fourth Way, Thomas Merton, Walt Whitman, fine press books, literature and poetry.

[Eureka Books and Editions](#)

Based in the Netherlands, Eureka specializes in esoteric books—both new and antiquarian.

[G-H Records \(Triangle Editions\)](#)

Publishers of the original recording of *The Music of Gurdjieff / deHartmann*. This piano music—played by Thomas de Hartmann himself—was composed in the 1920's and is the result of an extraordinary collaboration between deHartmann and G. I. Gurdjieff.

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A Journal of the Western Inner Traditions. GNOSIS has been the only newsstand publication devoted to the esoteric and mystical traditions of the West to achieve international circulation in recent decades.

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A quarterly newsletter-journal dedicated to the alchemy of self-transformation. The publication explores ideas and practices related to Gurdjieff, Taoism, and other great spiritual traditions in the search for greater meaning. It also explores the physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of breathing, chi kung, meditation, somatic awareness, and other transformative disciplines.

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Parabola is a quarterly journal devoted to the exploration of the quest for meaning as it is expressed in the world's myths, symbols, and religious traditions, with particular emphasis on the relationship between this store of wisdom and our modern life.

[Stopinder: A Gurdjieff Journal of Our Time](#)

The purpose of this journal is to encourage people to turn inward again and re-examine what their study, experiments, and their understanding have brought them to.

[Traditional Studies Press](#)

Publishers of *Guide and Index to Beelzebub's Tales*.

[Triad Books](#)

North America distributor for Eureka Editions (specializing in Nicoll publications).

[Two Rivers Press](#)

The publishers of *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* in its original translation. This edition first published in 1993 is an unaltered republication of the work as it was originally prepared for publication by G. Gurdjieff, published by Harcourt, Brace & Company in 1950. If you read only one book on Gurdjieff's teaching, this is it, and this is the place to get it.

[Weiser, Samuel](#)

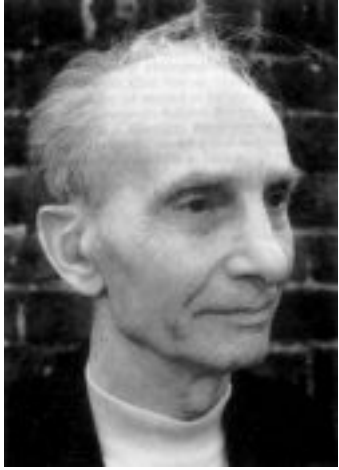
A publisher of many first rate books on Gurdjieff and his teaching.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Let Us Not Conclude

Some Reflections on the Specificity of This Teaching

by [Henri Tracol](#)

If *specificity* means what is “unique” in Gurdjieff’s teaching, let us quickly set aside a possible preliminary misunderstanding: “specificity” is not inevitably, as one might fear, a doctrinaire claim to exclusivity. Because what is unique in any path of spiritual search is its own particular way of approaching and perceiving reality. And this teaching offers us a feeling of just that: something which goes beyond suggested forms of experience and investigation.

Mightn’t we say that one of the clearest vocations of this teaching is that it tends to give birth in us to this faculty of orienting ourselves? And wouldn’t this faculty be a fundamental necessity for such a teaching, as its natural position with respect to the major traditional structures, and yet, at the same time, reducible to none of them?

From the vantage point of such an orientation, I know I am nearer to what is “specific” to this teaching inasmuch as I feel invited to *place myself inwardly* in relation to whatever presents itself from the outside.

If sufficiently nurtured, this spiritual flair might allow us, over time, to recognize the degree of authenticity of any form of experience which offers itself to our search.

Let us suppose that this form seems to be the bearer of a truth of the same nature as the one which Gurdjieff’s direct influence enabled us to actually live. Such a relation could hardly fail to capture the best of our attention and interest, spurring us on to further study. This similarity, however, would in no way authorize us to conclude there is an identity or a common heredity. Even less would it condone our playing the sorcerer’s apprentice in order to establish, on an artificial basis, an assimilation or some sort of synthesis.

And in the opposite case, if this particular form seemed aberrant, illusory, or dangerous, this would in itself be a precious aid to become more aware of what is essential to preserve, as well as the risks we

constantly run of making grievous errors and falsifications in our interpretations.

Forewarned of the danger—and faced with the endless number of guises through which what is “unique” in this teaching might appear to us—we will feel the need to rediscover, there again, the guarantee of a right orientation—and we will naturally look to find it at its very origins.

Gurdjieff’s teaching belongs to what he calls *the fourth way*. As an embodiment of a fourth way school, *it does not have a form defined* once and for all—which means: neither dogma nor ritual, strictly speaking.

It ceaselessly disappears, and ceaselessly must be discovered and rediscovered.

It imposes no preliminary renunciation but requires, within the frame of ordinary life, a set of appropriate conditions in view of a genuine *work upon oneself*.

It opens upon the perspective of a profound transformation of being through *awakening* and self-knowledge.

It presupposes in oneself a sincere quest for truth, the realization of one’s own “nothingness,” the recourse to effort—and to super-effort—toward the development of his power of consciousness.

It also allows the individual to discover and realize certain hidden possibilities, by means of simultaneous and coordinated engaging of one’s intellectual, emotional, and physical capacities toward a voluntary concentration upon the struggle which takes place within the self between one’s positive and negative tendencies.

This perpetual struggle is carried on within every seeker according to the principle of relativity which regulates the relations among the different energy levels in human nature, as in the universe.

~ • ~

But among these lines of force inherent in the fourth way, what is an altogether essential component of this type of teaching, is that above all, “the principal demand is the demand for understanding;” that the individual “must do nothing that he does not understand;” that he must “satisfy himself of the truth of what he is told.”

However, this primary requirement is the source of many misunderstandings: we must unfailingly return to the meaning that Gurdjieff gives to this imperative necessity for a *living comprehension*, in which our being totally engages itself. We are far from the false requirements of the ordinary individual who arrogates to himself the right to reduce any truth to a mental construct governing the movement of his associative thinking.

Moreover, the emphasis is placed upon the person, on the individual search for knowledge, upon the work that one must do to know oneself in order to transform and fulfill oneself.

The doctors in tradition have been quick to brand this primacy accorded to *individual experience*—“each person must initiate himself”—as a tendency toward “humanism,” which spawns the most nefarious deviations.

Indeed, regularly forgetting its cosmic and metaphysical perspective risks depriving this search of any possible breadth and reducing the Work, for some people, to a kind of flimsy psychological inquiry, while it encourages in others their latent predilections to a “pseudo-mysticism” devoid of any real content.

Gurdjieff thus reserves an important place for profound meditation, *for silence*, as a return to the source of all knowledge.... We are there before a truly *spiritual practice*, wherein the indispensable theoretical vision is not arbitrarily separated from a vivifying contact with ongoing experience, just as it is lived and felt.

The errors too often voiced with regard to the meaning given both to “individual search” and to “practice” serve to show the urgency of an imperative task: to try to digest what is essential in the ideas so as not to distort them, and to understand as quickly as possible the master’s aim, the principle of balance without which the Work could not exist.

Efforts to understand and to test the ideas: this is what gives this teaching its dynamic character: the growth of being indeed demands both a direct knowledge and a gradual mastery of the movements of our energy as it manifests itself on different levels.

Ultimately, however, what is unique and irreplaceable in Gurdjieff’s teaching is Gurdjieff himself.

Certainly, nothing could be more obvious to someone who lived this experience at his side, and who naturally feels called upon to bear witness.

A few years later, Gurdjieff—as a man—left us forever.

And yet ... How not feel his intimate presence within us as a permanent source of *self-remembering*?

What at is it, then, that allows a master’s influence to perpetuate itself once he has disappeared?

It is not so much an orthodoxy as a mode of perception inherited from him and which should appear through all things, in the heart of the most intimate experiences as well as on the level of everyday life.

We are quickly overwhelmed on every side, however ... and it is the unknown which wins out.... In the

long run, this calls upon us to perceive such a gift as an enigma—and as a challenge.

This is what is ceaselessly suggested, in countless ways, in [Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson](#), from the “Friendly Advice” to the reader—

Read each of my written expositions thrice:
Firstly—at least as you have already become mechanized
to read all your contemporary books and newspapers;
Secondly—as if you were reading aloud to another person;
And only thirdly—try to fathom the gist of my writings.

—to “The Arousing of Thought,” through the last chapter “From the Author.”

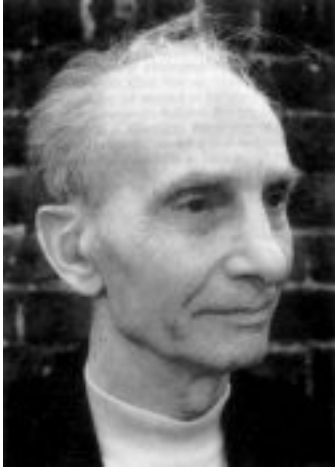
The adventure continues—in depth. It keeps alive in us the evidence of a *hidden continuity*: consciousness offers itself to us endlessly. But to welcome it, to take part in it, to sustain it, to bear witness to it, so many efforts must be attempted, must be renewed—so many “super-efforts.” It is just that which Gurdjieff calls the “Work.”

to be continued ...

~ • ~

This essay was previously published in *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching*, New York: Continuum, 1996.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Henri Tracol

Former journalist, photographer and sculptor, Henri Tracol was also a close pupil of Gurdjieff for ten years. As a leading exponent of the Gurdjieff teaching, he was President of the Gurdjieff Institute in France.

[Let Us Not Conclude](#)

Tracol characterizes what is essential in the Gurdjieff teaching as a call to “place myself interiorly in relation to what presents itself from the outside.” He emphasizes that this teaching guards against dependence on credulity, dogma and subjectivity.

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Gurdjieff

International
Review

Home
Editor's Note
Latest Issue
▶ Past Issues
▶ His Writings
His Pupils
Movements
The Music
Group Work
▶ Books
About this Site
Contact Us
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Gurdjieff

International Review

Fall 1999 Issue, Vol. III No. 1

In Memoriam: An Introduction to Gurdjieff

[Editorial Introduction](#)

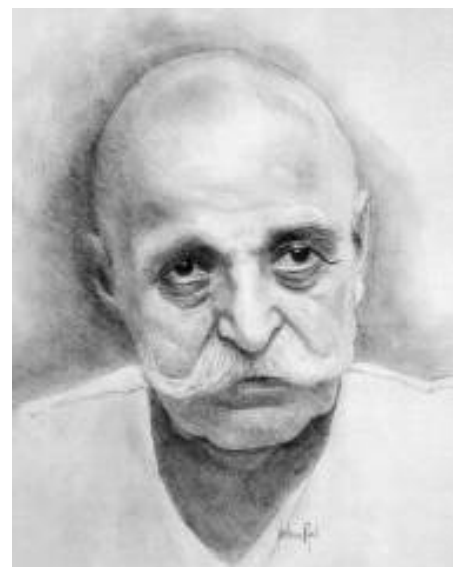
Our ninth issue, the last of the millennium, comes in the same month that George Ivanovich Gurdjieff died in Paris fifty years ago. This provides an occasion to consider the rich multi-faceted portrait of him that the future will inherit. Please note that this publication is now bi-annual: Fall (Oct-1) and Spring (Apr-1). Volumes I & II were quarterly. Selected articles from each back issue continue to be available to provide a sound introduction to Gurdjieff. All back issues are available in their entirety as [printed copies](#).

[Excerpts from the Talks and Writings of G. I. Gurdjieff](#)

These selected excerpts on philosophy, religion, science, and psychology are drawn from key passages of Gurdjieff's writings and notes on his talks.

[Gurdjieff, G. I. by Michel de Salzman](#)

Dr. de Salzman provides an informed and thoughtful synopsis of Gurdjieff's life, writings and influence as "an incomparable 'awakener'



"There do exist enquiring minds, which long for the truth of the heart, seek it, strive to solve the problems set by life, try to penetrate to the essence of things and phenomena and to penetrate into themselves. If a man reasons and thinks soundly, no matter which path he follows in solving these problems, he must inevitably arrive back at himself, and begin with the solution of the problem of what he is himself and what his place is in the world around him."

G. I. Gurdjieff

"Gurdjieff had a very wide range of knowledge, which embraced modern Western scientific theories as well as the special knowledge he had learned in his years of wandering in the East. But it was not so much what he said or what he did that impressed as what he was. Gurdjieff was a living example of the outcome of his own teaching, which he summed up in the words 'the harmonious development of man.'"

of men” and spiritual teacher who “left behind him a school embodying a specific methodology for the development of consciousness... The Gurdjieff teaching has emerged ... as one of the most penetrating spiritual teachings of modern times.”

George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff
(1877–1949)
by P. L. Travers

Travers—author of the *Mary Poppins* books—combines a historical account of Gurdjieff’s search and teaching with a pupil’s personal impressions of “this man whose life has the air of authentic myth.” She emphasizes that Gurdjieff “had come not to bring peace but a special kind of inner warfare and that his mission in life was to destroy men’s complacency and make them aware of their limitations. Only by such means, by what he called ‘conscious labours and intentional sufferings,’ was it possible to bring about their inner development. The Work, as his method came to be called, had, as it very soon appeared, been only too accurately named.”

Gurdjieff: The Unknown Man
by Kenneth Walker

Dr. Walker’s vivid account, particularly of his first visit to Gurdjieff’s Paris apartment in the late 1940s, is distinguished by his keenly trained powers of observation as a physician. “Gurdjieff used to say that a man revealed himself most clearly in his reactions to sexuality and to money. I could add yet another signpost to a man’s personality, namely, his reaction to Gurdjieff himself. Many reactions were possible, but it was impossible to be indifferent to him or to forget that he was there... Whatever he was, he was something on a much bigger scale than one had ever seen before, or is ever likely to see again.”

The Patriarch Goes West

Kenneth Walker

“No doubt there is a profound connection between Zen and the teaching of Gurdjieff, in that they both propose that only with tough disciplines and practice is it possible to relate to a ‘changeless self.’ Theory without practice, words without an immediate connection to experience, is for followers of both Zen and Gurdjieff as fruitless as ‘pouring from the empty into the void.’”

William Segal

“What I know for certain is that I truly began to recognize Mr. Gurdjieff when my eyes began to open. I saw him as he was to the extent I was able to see myself. From the moment when all my values—all inner facade and indeed also my outer one—began slowly and surely to be transformed, and another world, though still out of reach, began to appear in me, I knew it was he who was the cause.”

Henriette Lannes

“Beelzebub’s Tales ... gradually yields its meanings only after repeated readings. Each reading of it opens new facets of Gurdjieff’s teaching, not only in intellectual terms but at deep, subconscious levels.”

Jacob Needleman

“Efforts to understand and to test the ideas: this is what gives this teaching its dynamic character: the growth of being indeed

by William Segal

[Sample Only]

Segal compares Gurdjieff to a Zen Patriarch and points out that his teaching has a timely appeal to Westerners, especially for those who are “hungry for deeper, more authentic modes of life.”

demands both a direct knowledge and a gradual mastery of the movements of our energy as it manifests itself on different levels.”

Henri Tracol

To Recognize a Master

by Henriette Lannes

[Sample Only]

Madame Lannes describes the powerfully unsettling and awakening impact that Gurdjieff’s person and teaching had on her. She emphasizes that Gurdjieff’s legacy is the possibility, through his teaching, of realizing that “We have to recognize a master in ourselves.”

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All and Everything

by G. I. Gurdjieff

In these first two pages of Gurdjieff’s *All and Everything*, the author concisely describes the scope and purpose of his writings which were “All written according to entirely new principles of logical reasoning.”

An Introduction to the Writings

of G. I. Gurdjieff

by J. Walter Driscoll

This synopsis is drawn from the author’s *Gurdjieff: a Reading Guide*. It briefly sketches the contents and publication history of Gurdjieff’s writings and the notes that have been published of his talks.

Gurdjieff Observed

by Roger Lipsey

Drawing on excerpts from the lesser known but “unexpectedly rich secondary literature,”

Lipsey assembles a vivid composite portrait of Gurdjieff and the ontological challenge he presented to everyone around him. In so doing, he provides an excellent introductory survey of the anecdotal literature about Gurdjieff.

G. I. Gurdjieff and His School **by Jacob Needleman**

Professor Needleman surveys those aspects of Gurdjieff's "life and teaching that are of signal importance for anyone approaching this influential spiritual teacher for the first time."

He traces how Gurdjieff's influence is becoming a factor in contemporary civilization and describes the international activities of The Gurdjieff Foundation.

Gurdjieff as Survivalist **by James Moore**

[Sample Only]

Moore's introduction to the second edition of his biography offers an astute appraisal of the currents swirling around Gurdjieff's emerging cultural influence and reminds us of the obvious fact that Gurdjieff was "that rarest of creatures, a man who knows what he is talking about."

Let Us Not Conclude **by Henri Tracol**

Tracol characterizes what is essential in the Gurdjieff teaching as a call to "place myself interiorly in relation to what presents itself from the outside." He emphasizes that this teaching guards against dependence on credulity, dogma and subjectivity.



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Editorial Introduction

In Memoriam: An Introduction to Gurdjieff

Mister Gurdjieff died in Paris on October 29, 1949. Our ninth issue, the last of this millennium, commemorates the 50th anniversary of his death. This provides a special occasion to consider the rich multi-faceted portrait of Gurdjieff that has emerged and that the future will inherit.

In producing this web site and printed journal over the past few years, we have received numerous queries about Gurdjieff from readers of many ages and backgrounds, particularly from younger readers who are often more familiar with computers and the internet than are their elders. Also as parents, who's children are now adult, we have been asked by them about our life-long interest in Gurdjieff, about who he was, and what he taught. Therefore the subject matter for this issue has converged upon this theme.

George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff was an extraordinary man, a master in the truest sense. His teachings speak to our most essential questions: Who am I? Why am I here? What is the purpose of life, and of human life in particular? As a young man, Gurdjieff relentlessly pursued these questions and became convinced that practical answers lay within ancient traditions. Through many years of searching and practice he discovered answers and then set about putting what he had learned into a form understandable to the Western world. Gurdjieff maintained that, owing to the abnormal conditions of modern life, we no longer function in a harmonious way. He taught that in order to become harmonious, we must develop new faculties—or actualize latent potentialities—through “work on oneself.” He presented his teachings and ideas in three forms: writings, music, and movements which correspond to our intellect, emotions, and physical body.

Michel de Salzman remembers that, “During his lifetime, Gurdjieff was almost unknown outside his circle of followers. From the 1950s onward, however, his ideas began to spread both through the publication of his own writings and through the testimonies of his pupils.” We include an introduction to, and a selection of excerpts from, Mr. Gurdjieff's writings and talks.

Of Gurdjieff, Henriette Lannes asked, “What did he represent? Who was he? What did this being, this force, signify?” Her testimony, along with those of others of his pupils, provides a glimpse of possible

answers. “But it was not so much what he said or what he did that impressed as what he was,” Dr. Kenneth Walker concluded, “Gurdjieff was a living example of the outcome of his own teaching, which he summed up in the words ‘the harmonious development of man.’”

So here’s to all those who have what Gurdjieff described as “enquiring minds, which long for the truth of the heart, seek it, strive to solve the problems set by life, try to penetrate to the essence of things and phenomena and to penetrate into themselves.”

We dedicate our work on this issue to our children: *Benjamin, Gareth, Jessica, & Lisa.*

Greg & June Loy
Walter Driscoll

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

G. Gurdjieff's Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man

Le Prieuré

Having migrated for four years after escaping the Russian revolution with dozens of followers and family members, Gurdjieff settled in France and established his Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man at the Château Le Prieuré at Fontainebleau-Avon in October of 1922. These essays and articles present reminiscences which describe activities at the Prieuré from different points of view—some with great understanding and some with critical reserve or journalistic disdain.

[Excerpts from Prospectus Number 1](#)

Excerpts from Prospectus Number 1. Fontainebleau: Privately printed, 1923, issued in English, French and German, 15p. (An original copy of this document can be examined in The Heap-Reynolds 'Little Review Collection' at The University of Delaware Library. Sub-series F 21, 1926.) Beginning in the Spring of 1923, Gurdjieff's students were given a prospectus for the *Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man* that was also distributed to the public at movements demonstrations in Paris. It was the first statement about his past and ideas that Gurdjieff published in Europe.

[Gurdjieff's Aphorisms](#)

Gurdjieff's aphorisms as inscribed in a special script above the walls of the Study House of the Chateau du Prieuré at Fontainebleau in which Gurdjieff established his Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man.

[Some Memories of the Prieuré](#)

First published here, this invaluable first hand sketch of life at the Prieuré in 1923 by Dr. Mary C. Bell was written in September of 1949 and gives a warm, lively glimpse of the way Gurdjieff guided his pupils.

The "Forest Philosophers"

March 1923—*New Statesman*—Clifford Sharpe responds to misleading published reports about the Prieuré. Modest and scholarly in tone, this account stands out for its informed insight into the workings of Gurdjieff's Institute. The title of this piece became a journalistic catch phrase of the day.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Excerpts from Prospectus Number 1

G. Gurdjieff's Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man

**Main Branch: France Fontainebleau
(Formerly "Chateau du Prieuré")**

The Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man by the G. I. Gurdjieff system is practically the continuation of the Society that went under the name of the "Seekers after Truth." This Society was founded in 1895 by a group of various specialists, including doctors, archaeologists, priests, painters, etc., whose aim was to study in close collaboration so-called supernatural phenomena, in which each of them was interested from a particular point of view.

During the existence of the Society, its members undertook many very difficult journeys, mostly in Persia, Afghanistan, Turkestan, Thibet, India, but also in other countries. They also undertook a good deal of work of various descriptions in connection with their object, which involved much labor and organisation.

Throughout the period of travel and work many of the Society's members lost their lives, while others from time to time abandoned the task, and only a small number returned to Russia in 1913, under the leadership of Mr. Gurdjieff....

[The complete text is available in the [printed copy](#) of this issue.]

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Gurdjieff's Aphorisms

**inscribed in a special script above
the
walls of the Study House at the
Prieuré**



1. Like what “it” does not like.
2. The highest that a man can attain is to be able to do.
3. The worse the conditions of life the more productive the work, always provided you remember the work.
4. Remember yourself always and everywhere.
5. Remember you come here having already understood the necessity of struggling with yourself—only with yourself. Therefore thank everyone who gives you the opportunity.
6. Here we can only direct and create conditions, but not help.
7. Know that this house can be useful only to those who have recognized their nothingness and who believe in the possibility of changing.
8. If you already know it is bad and do it, you commit a sin difficult to redress.
9. The chief means of happiness in this life is the ability to consider externally always, internally never.
10. Do not love art with your feelings.
11. A true sign of a good man is if he loves his father and mother.
12. Judge others by yourself and you will rarely be mistaken.
13. Only help him who is not an idler.
14. Respect every religion.
15. I love him who loves work.
16. We can only strive to be able to be Christians.
17. Don't judge a man by the tales of others.
18. Consider what people think of you—not what they say.
19. Take the understanding of the East and the knowledge of the West—and then seek.
20. Only he who can take care of what belongs to others may have his own.
21. Only conscious suffering has any sense.

22. It is better to be temporarily an egoist than never to be just.
23. Practice love first on animals, they are more sensitive.
24. By teaching others you will learn yourself.
25. Remember that here work is not for work's sake but is only a means.
26. Only he can be just who is able to put himself in the position of others.
27. If you have not by nature a critical mind your staying here is useless.
28. He who has freed himself of the disease of "tomorrow" has a chance to attain what he came here for.
29. Blessed is he who has a soul, blessed is he who has none, but woe and grief to him who has it in embryo.
30. Rest comes not from the quantity but from the quality of sleep.
31. Sleep little without regret.
32. The energy spent on active inner work is then and there transformed into a fresh supply, but that spent on passive work is lost for ever.
33. One of the best means for arousing the wish to work on yourself is to realize that you may die at any moment. But first you must learn how to keep it in mind.
34. Conscious love evokes the same in response. Emotional love evokes the opposite. Physical love depends on type and polarity.
35. Conscious faith is freedom. Emotional faith is slavery. Mechanical faith is foolishness.
36. Hope, when bold, is strength. Hope, with doubt, is cowardice. Hope, with fear, is weakness.
37. Man is given a definite number of experiences—economizing them, he prolongs his life.
38. Here there are neither Russians nor English, Jews nor Christians, but only those who pursue one aim—to be able to be.

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Gurdjieff

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Review

Home

Editor's Note

Latest Issue

▶ Past Issues

▶ His Writings

His Pupils

Movements

The Music

Group Work

▶ Books

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Contact Us

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Gurdjieff

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Spring 2002 Issue, Vol. V No. 1

A “Teacher of Dancing”

Guest Editorial
by Ellen Dooling Draper

Although we have been gathering articles about movements since we established the *Gurdjieff International Review* in 1996, this is the first time we have provided coverage of this vital aspect of Gurdjieff's teaching. The views expressed in this collection are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of any specific organization. Our guest editor, Ellen Dooling Draper, is a member of the Gurdjieff Foundation of New York and a previous editor with *Parabola Magazine*.

Part I: Gurdjieff on
Movements
by G. I. Gurdjieff

Gurdjieff wrote sparingly about movements. The following excerpts taken from *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson, Meetings with Remarkable Men* and *Views from the Real World* are reprinted by the kind permission of Triangle Editions, Inc.

**Part II: Historical
Perspective**



“When one's body revolts against work, fatigue soon sets in; then one must not rest for it would be a victory for the body. When the body desires to rest, don't; when the mind knows it ought to rest, do so, but one must know and distinguish language of body and mind, and be honest.”

G. I. Gurdjieff

“What exactly are these movements? This question can really be answered only from direct experience of practice of the movements.”

Henri Thomasson

“Occasionally there were public performances. Gurdjieff, in one of his irrepressible freaks, would dress everyone up in Turkish costume. This just had to be borne.”

Pierre Schaeffer

“When one begins to study the Movements, very quickly what

Descriptions of the practice and performance of Gurdjieff's Movements during his lifetime, between 1920 and 1949.

Gurdjieff's Temple Dances
by John G. Bennett

John G. Bennett describes the "Temple Dances" Gurdjieff was teaching his pupils in Constantinople in 1920 and at the Prieuré in 1923.

Dancing
by Anna Butkovsky-Hewitt

A skilled pianist and dancer, the author describes practicing movements in 1922–1923 as Gurdjieff prepared for public demonstrations in Paris and New York.

Gurdjieff Movements
Demonstration
by Louise Welch

Gurdjieff arrives in New York City in February 1924 and presents a movements demonstration at the Neighborhood Playhouse.

The Role of Movement in the
Complete Education of Man
by René Daumal

Daumal invites the reader to participate in a movements class lead by Jeanne de Salzmann in the 1930s.

A Talk on the Dances
by C. S. Nott

This excerpt provides C. S. Nott's vivid account of a 1947 talk in Paris on movements given "by an older pupil who was Gurdjieff's 'right hand.'"

becomes obvious is the weakness of the attention: it has no endurance, no defense against the endless motion of the associations, and it is often unconsciously taken away at the very moment that its full concentration would be needed."

Paul Reynard

"We realise in the movements ... that one can collect one's attention; that one can be awake at times and have an overall sensation of oneself; that a quietness of mind, an awareness of body and an interest of feeling can be brought together and that this results in a more complete state of attentiveness in which the life force is felt and one is sensitive to higher influences. Thus, one has a taste of how life can be lived differently."

Jessmin Howarth

"You do not realize enough that your attention is your only chance. Without it you can do nothing."

Jeanne de Salzmann

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May 1, 2002

[A Session of “Movements”](#) [by Pierre Schaeffer](#)

Pierre Schaeffer provides an exceptionally intelligent and heartfelt glimpse of his experience in Gurdjieff’s movements class.

Part III: Contemporary Perspective

Interviews and articles written since Gurdjieff’s death in 1949. The photographs within this section are stills from documentary films of the Movements made from the period 1960–1974 under the direction of Jeanne de Salzmann. They are reproduced by the kind permission of the Institut Gurdjieff, Paris, and the heirs of Jeanne de Salzmann.

[Remember Inner Work](#) [by Jessmin Howarth](#)

Jessmin Howarth reviews the history of movements in Gurdjieff’s groups and hints at some discoveries that the practice of the movements can provide.

[Sacred Dance](#) [by Pauline de Dampierre](#)

Pauline de Dampierre examines “the ‘science of movement’ which Gurdjieff rediscovered.”

[Working with the Movements](#) [by Henri Thomasson](#)

Thomasson shares his struggle after he “experienced a strong rejection of ‘the Movements’, which Gurdjieff insisted on as an essential part of his teaching.”

[Dances are for the Mind](#) [by Paul Reynard](#)

Reynard reminds us that the movements invite us to discover a new attentiveness and the opportunity to be both present and open to a new level of consciousness.

[The Teacher of Dancing](#) [by Josée de Salzmann](#)

An informed examination of movements is provided and their role as “a language that our intellect cannot understand well but to which the body is sensitive.”

[This Entity We Call the Body](#) [by Don Hoyt](#)

The relationship between attention, the body, mind, awareness and movements as a “foundation for the real work of self study and self awaking” is examined.

[The Music Has To Like You...](#) [by Mitchell Rudzinski](#)

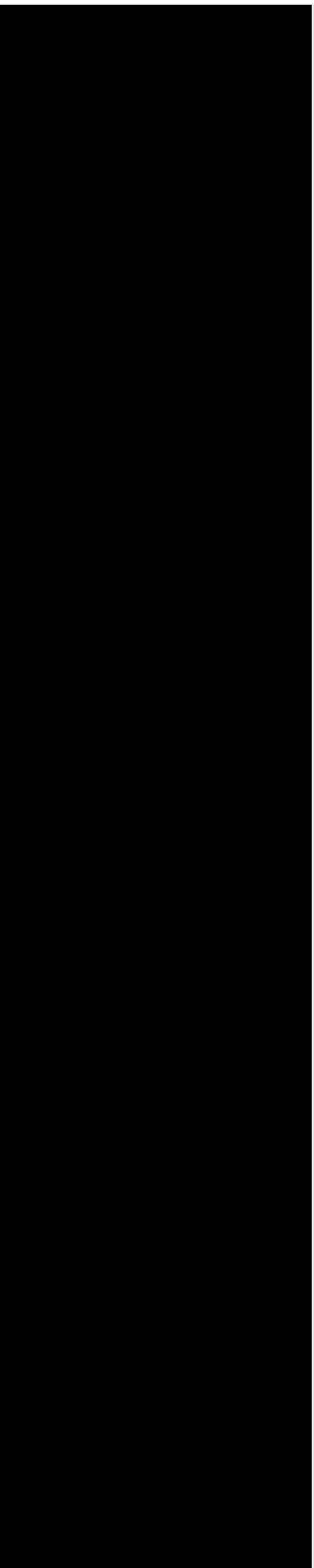
Mitchell Rudzinski’s advice and comments to his students regarding playing music for the movements is provided from their journals and notebooks.

[On Giving up the Luxury of](#) [Knowing](#) [by Stafford Ordahl](#)

Ordahl considers the courage to abandon what is known mechanically in favor of trusting an unknown “something else” to be able to play movements music.

[Behind the Visible Movement](#) [by Jeanne de Salzmann](#)

The inner movement of attention upon which the outer movement depends.



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Overview of Past Issues

[Vol. I No. 1, Fall 1997 Issue](#)

- [Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man, Excerpts from Prospectus \(G. Gurdjieff\)](#)
- [Sayings of Gurdjieff \(Kenneth Walker\)](#)
- [Gurdjieff: The Unknown Teacher \(J. G. Bennett\)](#)
- [Gurdjieff Chronology \(James Moore\)](#)
- [Gurdjieff: An Original Teacher \(Driscoll & Baker\)](#)
- [Lord Pentland \(Walter Driscoll\)](#)

[Vol. I No. 2, Winter 1997/1998 Issue](#)

- [Commentary on *Beelzebub's Tales* \(Terry Winter Owens\)](#)
- [Commentary on *Meetings with Remarkable Men* \(Terry Winter Owens\)](#)
- [The Struggle to "Fathom the Gist" of *Beelzebub's Tales* \(Terry Winter Owens\)](#)
- [Gurdjieff's Philosophy of Nature \(Basarab Nicolescu\)](#)
- [No Harem: Gurdjieff and the Women of The Rope \(Rob Baker\)](#)
- [Jane Heap \(Rob Baker\)](#)
- [Great Harmonizer Tuning Up](#)
- [G. Gurdjieff Explains \(G. Gurdjieff\)](#)
- [Gurdjieff and the Armenian Boy Sarkis](#)

[Vol. I No. 3, Spring 1998 Issue — Special Issue on A. R. Orage](#)

- [A. R. Orage: Introduction & Bibliography \(Walter Driscoll\)](#)
- [Black Sheep Philosophers: Gurdjieff—Ouspensky—Orage \(Gorham Munson\)](#)
- [The Essence of Orage: Some Aphorisms & Observations \(A. R. Orage\)](#)
- [Readers and Writers: Reprints from the *New Age*, 1918–1921 \(A. R. Orage\)](#)
- [Good and Evil: Nov 5 \(Part 1 of 3\) \(A. R. Orage\)](#)
- [New Democracy Vol. III, No. 8 \(New York\) December 15, 1934](#)

- [New English Weekly Vol. VI, No. 5 \(London\) November 15, 1934](#)
- [Subscriptions and Reprints](#)

Vol. I No. 4, Summer 1998 Issue — Special Issue on Le Prieuré

- [The Forest Philosophers \(C. E. Bechhofer Roberts\)](#)
- [New Cult \(a series of 4 articles\) \(E. C. Bowyer\)](#)
- [A VISIT to Gourdyev \(Denis Saurat\)](#)
- [An Experiment at Fontainebleau: A Personal Reminiscence \(James C. Young\)](#)
- [Taking the Life Cure in Gurdjieff's School \(Maud Hoffman\)](#)
- [Some Memories of the Prieuré \(Mary C. Bell\)](#)
- [The "Forest Philosophers" \(Clifford Sharpe\)](#)
- [Gurdjieff Heads the Newest Cult, Which Harks Back to Ancient Days \(Raymond G. Carroll\)](#)
- [On Man's Place in the Scheme of Things \(Bernard Metz\)](#)
- [Commentary on *Exchanges Within* \(Dennis Lewis\)](#)
- [Good and Evil: Nov 12 \(Part 2 of 3\) \(A. R. Orage\)](#)

Vol. II No. 1, Fall 1998 Issue — Special Issue on the Gurdjieff Literature

- [Gurdjieff: The Man and the Literature \(James Moore\)](#)
- [GURDJIEFF: An Annotated Bibliography — a review \(Andrew Rawlinson\)](#)
- [The *Tales* Themselves: An Overview \(Anna Challenger\)](#)
- [The Disenchantment of the Dragon \(Martha Heyneman\)](#)
- [On Attention and Understanding of *Beelzebub's Tales* \(G. Gurdjieff\)](#)
- [Beelzebub's Tales: Fifty Years Later \(Denis Saurat\)](#)
- [Facts, Fictions & Speculations \(Walter Driscoll\)](#)
- [Henriette H. Lannes \(James Moore\)](#)
- [Good and Evil: Nov 19 \(Part 3 of 3\) \(A. R. Orage\)](#)
- [Are We Awake? \(A. R. Orage\)](#)

Vol. II No. 2, Winter 1998/1999 Issue — Special Issue on P. D. Ouspensky

- [P. D. Ouspensky \(John Pentland\)](#)
- [P. D. Ouspensky: a Biographical Outline \(Merrily E. Taylor\)](#)
- [A Brief Overview of Certain Aspects of the Thought of Petyr Demianovich Ouspensky](#)

[\(Michael Presley\)](#)

- [In Anti-Bolshevist Russia \(C. E. Bechhofer Roberts\)](#)
- [The Romance and Mystery of *Tertium Organum* \(Claude Bragdon\)](#)
- [Not a Cult: Dancing to Develop the Mind \(E. C. Bowyer\)](#)
- [Strange Life of Ivan Osokin \(John Pentland\)](#)
- [The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution](#)
- [In Search of the Miraculous \(Jacob Needleman\)](#)
- [P. D. Ouspensky: a Brief Bibliography \(Walter Driscoll\)](#)
- [Gurdjieff's Theory of Art \(Anna Challenger\)](#)

Vol. II No. 3, Spring 1999 Issue — A Focus on Historical Essays

- [Gurdjieff's *All and Everything* — A Study \(J. G. Bennett\)](#)
- [John G. Bennett: The Struggle to "Make Something" for Oneself \(George Bennett\)](#)
- [The 100 Most Influential Books Ever Written — A Review \(Walter Driscoll\)](#)
- [The 100 Most Influential Books Ever Written — Chapter 94: *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* \(Martin Seymour-Smith\)](#)
- [Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson — Commentary \(A. L. Staveley\)](#)
- [Superforce and Beelzebub \(Jyri Paloheimo\)](#)
- [A. R. Orage: An Introduction \(Louise Welch\)](#)
- [A. R. Orage's *My Note Book* \(October 1933\)](#)
- [A. R. Orage's *My Note Book* \(January 1934\)](#)
- [A. R. Orage's *My Note Book* \(April 1934\)](#)
- [A. R. Orage's *My Note Book* \(October 1934\)](#)
- [Ouspensky on Love \(Claude Bragdon\)](#)
- [The Case of P. D. Ouspensky \(Marie Seton\)](#)
- [The Theory of Celestial Influence](#)
- [Gurdjieff Obituary — *The Times*](#)

Vol. II No. 4, Summer 1999 Issue — The Gurdjieff / de Hartmann Music

- [On Listening to the Gurdjieff / de Hartmann Music](#)
- [Music: *Our Life with Mr Gurdjieff* \(Thomas de Hartmann\)](#)
- [The Music of Gurdjieff / de Hartmann — Triangle Editions Recordings \(Thomas C. Daly\)](#)
- [Music Manuscript Sample Page \(Thomas de Hartmann\)](#)
- [The Sound of Gurdjieff \(Laurence Rosenthal\)](#)
- [Gurdjieff / de Hartmann Music for the Piano — Wergo / Schott Recordings \(Eugene E. Foster\)](#)

- [Gurdjieff and Music \(Laurence Rosenthal\)](#)
- [Music for the Film *Meetings with Remarkable Men* \(Laurence Rosenthal\)](#)
- [On Thomas de Hartmann \(Thomas C. Daly and Thomas A. G. Daly\)](#)
- [On Olga de Hartmann \(Thomas C. Daly and Thomas A. G. Daly\)](#)
- [Attention—Wish—Will—Free Will \(Thomas de Hartmann\)](#)
- [A Special Evening at the Essentuki Social Club \(Thomas de Hartmann\)](#)
- [The Strait Gate \(Basarab Nicolescu\)](#)
- [Daumal with Gurdjieff and the de Salzmanns \(Kathleen F. Rosenblatt\)](#)

Vol. III No. 1, Fall 1999 Issue — In Memoriam: An Introduction to Gurdjieff

- [Excerpts from the Talks and Writings of G. I. Gurdjieff](#)
- [Gurdjieff, G. I. \(Michel de Salzman\)](#)
- [George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff, 1877–1949 \(P. L. Travers\)](#)
- [Gurdjieff: The Unknown Man \(Kenneth Walker\)](#)
- [The Patriarch Goes West \(William Segal\)](#)
- [To Recognize a Master \(Henriette Lannes\)](#)
- [All and Everything \(G. I. Gurdjieff\)](#)
- [An Introduction to the Writings of G. I. Gurdjieff \(J. Walter Driscoll\)](#)
- [Gurdjieff Observed \(Roger Lipsey\)](#)
- [G. I. Gurdjieff and His School \(Jacob Needleman\)](#)
- [Gurdjieff as Survivalist \(James Moore\)](#)
- [Let Us Not Conclude \(Henri Tracol\)](#)

Vol. III No. 2, Spring 2000 Issue — Some Pupils of Gurdjieff

- [Jane Heap: As Remembered by Some of Those She Taught \(A. L. Staveley\)](#)
- [Threads of Time: Recollections of Jeanne de Salzman \(Peter Brook\)](#)
- [William & Louise Welch \(Patty Welch Llosa\)](#)
- [For Dr. William J. Welch \(Roger Lipsey\)](#)
- [A Remembrance of W. A. Nyland: In the Ear and Eye of the Beholder \(Terry Winter Owens\)](#)
- [Louise March](#)
- [Pamela Travers](#)
- [George Mountford Adie \(Joseph Azize\)](#)
- [Dr. John Lester \(David Kangas\)](#)
- [Combining Good and Truth, Now: An Homage to Maurice Nicoll \(Bob Hunter\)](#)
- [Gurdjieff Heralds the Awakening of Consciousness Now \(James George\)](#)

- [*Beelzebub, a Master Stroke: Belzébuth, un coup de maître* \(Manuel Rainoird\)](#)
- [Copyright Conventions in an Unconventional World: A Note about the Writings of Gurdjieff and his Circle \(Roger Lipsey\)](#)
- [*Brother in Elysium: Orage in Gurdjieff's Service* \(Michael Benham\)](#)
- [The Strange Cult of Gurdjieff: an Insider's Story of the Most Mysterious Religious Movement in the World \(Gorham Munson\)](#)
- [Around the Theatre: *The Voice of Moscow*](#)

Vol. IV No. 1, Fall 2000 Issue

- [People Who Hunger and Thirst for Truth](#)
- [Excerpts from the Talks and Writings of G. I. Gurdjieff](#)
- [The Old Man and the Children of the Age](#)
- [Getting in Touch with Gurdjieff](#)
- [A Conversation on *Meetings with Remarkable Men*](#)
- [The Holy War](#)
- [Commentary on "The Holy War"](#)
- [For William Segal \(1904–2000\)](#)
- [Wm. Segal](#)
- [In Light of Meaning: An Interview with William Segal](#)
- [Christopher Fremantle \(1906–1978\)](#)
- [Ouspensky](#)
- [A Theatre for Us](#)
- [Mr. Nyland and the Piano](#)

Vol. IV No. 2, Spring 2001 Issue

- [Georges Gurdjieff: A French Documentary Film](#)
- [Gurdjieff's Self-Revelation: A review of *Meetings with Remarkable Men*](#)
- [Louise Welch — Essence Friend](#)
- [Louise Welch: A Poem by Martha Heyneman](#)
- [The Essence of the Work: An Interview with Jacob Needleman](#)
- [A Passion for Understanding: Notes from an Orage Group, New York, 1927](#)
- [In Denikin's Russia: A Journey Through Georgia](#)
- [Two Accounts of an Evening with Gurdjieff](#)
- [ME — I AM](#)
- [Peter Brook and Traditional Thought](#)

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Gurdjieff Home Page

Fall 1997 Issue, Vol. I No. 1

Editorial Introduction

It is our whim to make this the best general website available on Gurdjieff. Lest you misinterpret our intention or 'whim' as flippant and frivolous, please let us share one of our favorite anecdotes...

G. Gurdjieff's Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man

[Sample Only]

Excerpts from Prospectus Number 1. Fontainebleau: Privately printed, 1923, issued in English, French and German, 15p. (An original copy of this document can be examined in The Heap-Reynolds 'Little Review Collection' at The University of Delaware Library. Sub-series F 21, 1926.) Beginning in the Spring of 1923, Gurdjieff's students were given a prospectus for the *Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man* that was also distributed to the public at movements demonstrations in Paris. It was the first statement about his past and ideas that Gurdjieff published in Europe.

Sayings of Gurdjieff

More aphorisms and sayings of Gurdjieff as documented by Kenneth Walker in his book, *A Study of Gurdjieff's Teaching*.

Gurdjieff: The Unknown Teacher

[Sample Only]

A previously unpublished essay by John G. Bennett and published with the permission of George Bennett. Taken from a typescript written in 1949. Bennett's essays of this period,



The first succeeding generation began ... to superwisacre so thoroughly that there reached the beings of the third and fourth generations nothing else but what our Honorable Mullah Nassr Eddin defines by the words: 'only information about its specific smell.'

G. I. Gurdjieff

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October 1, 1997

written when he was in contact with Gurdjieff during the last years of Gurdjieff's life, have a distinctive balance and intensity that sets them apart. Begins with descriptions of Bennett's meetings with Gurdjieff and Ouspensky and his conviction that at last he had found "a comprehensive and convincing world outlook."

[Gurdjieff Chronology](#)

Chronology reproduced from *Gurdjieff: the Anatomy of a Myth* (Element Books Ltd 1991, 415p., ISBN 1-85230-114-7) by permission of the author James Moore.

[Gurdjieff: An Original Teacher](#)

[Sample Only]

An abridgement of this introduction to and short biography of Gurdjieff, written by J. Walter Driscoll and George Baker, was published in *Gurdjieff: an annotated bibliography*.

[Lord Pentland](#)

A brief sketch of John Pentland's life and writings by J. Walter Driscoll. Pentland was a pupil of both P. D. and Mme. Ouspensky for many years during the 1930s and 1940s. He spent considerable time with Gurdjieff in 1949, after which he led the Gurdjieff Work in North America.



Gurdjieff Home Page

Editorial Introduction

Fall 1997 Issue, Vol. I No. 1

It is our whim to make this the best general website available on Gurdjieff. Lest you misinterpret our intention or 'whim' as flippant and frivolous, please let us share one of our favorite anecdotes:

[By 1930, A. R. Orage had been in New York for almost 7 years and] his thoughts turned again towards England. With increasing strain between himself and his leader, Orage began to allow himself fully to recognize how utterly different was his own destiny from that of a man like Gurdjieff. For as soon as he realized that he could no longer work under such leadership, and that the 'school' had a somewhat proprietary claim to the system of ideas he was teaching, he felt no power to go on unless he found a new initiative and a new didactic psychology in himself alone. And when he looked into himself, he found nothing of the kind. His ambition, such as it remained, and his abilities were of quite another order.

Gurdjieff was decisive, that his school was a school of individuation, and that a man must find his own work in life. How should he know it, how choose it? That, no one else could tell him. There were certain laws about it, however—three in particular. The goal of achievement which a man decides to aim at must be such that it involves no violation of moral norms. Secondly, he must get something for himself out of it—whether it be money, health and happiness, or honour; some genuine profit must accrue to himself. Thirdly, the task he assumes must be neither too big for him, nor too small. If it be too big, he will incur failure, compensated by megalomania; if too small, his powers will decline even with success and his career will be embittered. But provided these three conditions be fulfilled, it does not matter what any one thinks of a man's work. All that is necessary is that it should fit him; and that it should be his true desire—if you like, his *whim*—to do it. For example, to have the best stamp-collection in the world would not appear to many people to be a life ambition of the highest dignity—and perhaps it is not. But it is a job of a man's size: and if it is your real whim, you had better live for it. Whether you succeed is, of course, another matter.

Whilst they were talking in this vein, someone asked Gurdjieff if he would disclose his own 'whim,' and he said it was to live and teach so that there should be a new

conception of God in the world, a change in the very meaning of the word. Orage, taking up the gauntlet, said that for his part, his 'whim' was to produce and edit the best weekly journal in England.

From *A. R. Orage: A Memoir* by Philip Mairet, University Books, 1966, pp. 104–5.

Herein we are launching much new material in a revised format and invite your comments and suggestions as well as contributions in the way of letters and essays. What do you think of the changes we have made? Are there specific articles you recommend for inclusion or subjects you wish us to research and cover with an article?

While we do not want this page to become a news group, we are interested in providing a platform for focused exchange about the study of Gurdjieff's ideas and teaching—as far as that is possible in this medium.

J. Walter Driscoll

Greg Loy

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Featured: [Fall 1997 Issue, Vol. I \(1\)](#)



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Sayings of Gurdjieff

An excerpt from [A Study of Gurdjieff's Teaching](#)

by [Kenneth Walker](#)

Gurdjieff had the capacity to convey so much in some forceful saying that his words echoed for a long time in the hearers' minds. His maxims did not usually take the form of polished aphorisms for, although he was acquainted with many different tongues, he was a master of none of them, and was inclined to poke fun at what he called the 'bon ton literary language.' Indeed, some of his phrases were memorable chiefly because of their colloquial character, such as that saying of his which Ouspensky so often quoted: 'To know everything it is necessary to know only a very little but to know that very little is to know pretty much.' A great deal of the force in G's maxims was imparted by the man who uttered them, and this force is absent from the written word. Yet despite the weakening which his sayings will undergo in print, I have felt it worth while recording some of them in this final chapter.

If it were possible for me to introduce them with a short and telling description of the man who uttered them and whose presence made such a strong impact—not necessarily favourable—on everybody who came into contact with him, I would do so, but I have never read any successful description of him. I shall not attempt, therefore, to make a thumbnail drawing of a man so difficult to portray as George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff. His maxims must stand by themselves.

1. It is better to be temporarily selfish than never to be just.
Only *conscious* suffering is of value.
Man is given a limited quantity of experiences; being economical with them lengthens his life.
2. Know that this house is of value only to those who have recognized their nothingness and believe it is possible to alter.
Here we can only direct and create conditions, but not help.
Remember that here work is not done for work's sake, but as a means.
Like what *it* does not like.

3. Conscious love evokes the same in response.
Emotional love evokes the opposite.
Physical love depends on type and polarity.

Faith of consciousness is freedom.
Faith of feeling is slavery.
Faith of body is stupidity.

Hope of consciousness is strength.
Hope of feeling is cowardice.
Hope of body is disease.

4. Only he can be impartial who is able to put himself into the position of others.
We can only strive to be able to be Christians.
I love him who loves work.
Judge others according to yourself and you will seldom be mistaken.
5. Consider what others think of you, not what they say.
If you are not critical by nature, it is useless for you to remain here.
He who has got rid of the disease 'Tomorrow' has the possibility to attain what he is here for.
6. If you already know what is wrong and do it, you commit a sin that is difficult to redress.
The chief means of happiness in this life is the ability to consider outwardly always, inwardly never.
7. One of the strongest motives for the wish to work on yourself is the realization that you may die at any moment—only you must first realize this.
Man is refreshed not by the quantity but by the quality of sleep—sleep little without regret.
8. The highest that a man can attain is to be able to *do*.
9. Here there are neither English nor Russians, Jews nor Christians, but only those following one aim, to be able to be.
10. Take the understanding of the East and the knowledge of the West and then seek.
Only he who can take care of the property of others can have his own.
11. Remember yourself always and everywhere.
12. A good man loves his father and mother.
Help him only who strives not to be an idler.
Love not art with your feelings.

Respect all religions.

Judge no one according to the tales of others.

13. Blessed is he who hath a soul,
Blessed is he who hath none,
Woe and sorrow to him who hath it in conception.
14. The worse the conditions of life, the greater the possibility for productive work, provided you work consciously.
The energy expended in active inner work is immediately transformed into new energy; that expended in passive work is lost forever.
Practice love on animals first; they react better and more sensitively.

I add some additional sayings of Gurdjieff's, most of which have been abstracted from accounts of meetings taken by him in London and America during the years 1921–24:

- There is only one kind of magic and this is 'doing.'
- All energy spent on conscious work is an investment; that spent mechanically is lost forever.
- We must destroy our buffers. Children have none; therefore we must become like little children.
- We attract forces according to our being.
- Humanity is the earth's nerve-endings through which planetary vibrations are received for transmission.
- Everything in the universe has a place in a scale.
- No energy is ever lost in the cosmic scheme.
- One twentieth of all our energy goes to emotional and instinctive centres. Self-remembering is a lamp which must be kept alight by energy from these two centres. Our thinking centre is not really a centre, but an apparatus for collecting impressions.
- Formatory apparatus resembles a hired typist who works for a firm and has a large number of stereotyped replies for external impressions. She sends printed replies to other centres who are the 'directors' of the firm and who are strangers to each other. Wrong replies are often sent, as the typist is asleep or lazy.

- In deep sleep all communication between centres is closed. Our sleep is bad because we do not cut off lines of communication.
- We have good and bad angels. The good angels work by way of our voluntary, active nature and the bad through our passive nature.
- Mr. Self-love and Madame Vanity are the two chief agents of the devil.
- Do not be affected by externals. In themselves they are harmless; it is we who allow ourselves to be hurt by them.
- We never reach the limits of our strength.
- If we do what we like doing, we are immediately rewarded by the pleasure of doing it. If we do what we don't like doing the reward must come later. It is a mathematical law and all life is mathematics.
- Man is a symbol of the laws of creation; in him there is evolution, involution, struggle, progress and retrogression, struggle between positive and negative, active and passive, yes and no, good and evil.
- Men have their minds and women their feelings more highly developed. Either alone can give nothing. Think what you feel and feel what you think. Fusion of the two produces another force.
- For some people religion is useful but for others it is only a policeman.
- We are sheep kept to provide wool for our masters who feed us and keep us as slaves of illusion. But we have a chance of escape and our masters are anxious to help us, but we like being sheep. It is comfortable.
- He who can love can *be*; he who can *be* can *do*; he who can do *is*.
- Sincerity is the key to self-knowledge and to be sincere with oneself brings great suffering.
- Sleep is very comfortable, but waking is very bitter.
- Free will is the function of the Master within us. Our 'will' is the supremacy of one desire over another.
- Eastern art has a mathematical basis. It is a script with an inner and an outer content. In Persia

there is a room in a monastery which makes one weep owing to mathematical combinations of different parts of its architecture. Real art is knowledge and not talent.

- An ordinary man has no ‘Master.’ He is ruled now by the mind, now by the feelings and now by the body. Often the order comes from the automatic apparatus and still more often he is ordered about by the sex centre. Real will can only be when one ‘I’ rules, when there is a ‘master’ in the house.
- Morality is a stick with two ends; it can be turned this way and that.
- From the time when man began to live on the Earth, from the time of Adam onwards, there started to be formed within him, with the help of God, of Nature, and of all his surroundings, an organ whose function is conscience. Every man has this organ, and whoever is guided by it automatically lives according to God’s commandments. If our consciences were clear, and not buried, there would be no need to speak about morality, for consciously or unconsciously everyone would behave according to God’s commandments. Unfortunately conscience is covered up with a kind of crust which can be pierced only by intense suffering; then conscience speaks. But after a while a man calms down and once more the organ becomes covered over and buried.
- You should forget about morality. Conversations about morality are simply empty talk. Your aim is *inner morality*.
- External morality is different everywhere.
- You should understand, and establish it as a firm rule, not to pay attention to other people’s opinions. You must be free of people surrounding you, and when you are free inside you will be free of them.
- To be just at the moment of action is a hundred times more valuable than to be just afterwards.
- To gain anything real, long practice is necessary. Try to accomplish very small things first.
- There are two kinds of doing—automatic and doing what you ‘wish.’ Take a small thing which you ‘wish’ to do and cannot do and make this your God. Let nothing interfere. If you ‘wish,’ you can. Without wishing you never ‘can.’ ‘Wish’ is the most powerful thing in the world.
- To bear the manifestation of others is a big thing. The last thing for a man.
- In the river of life suffering is not intentional. In conscious life suffering is intentional and of great value.

- To love one must first forget all about love. Make it your aim and look for direction. As we are we cannot possibly love.
- Until a man uncovers himself he cannot see.

Aphorisms © 1924 G. I. Gurdjieff

A Study of Gurdjieff's Teaching © 1957 Fletcher & Son Ltd.

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Featured: [Fall 1997 Issue, Vol. I \(1\)](#)

Revision: April 1, 2000



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Gurdjieff

The Unknown Teacher

by [John G. Bennett](#)

Few places exist where East and West blend so intimately that one cannot tell whether the environment is Asiatic or European. I have never seen this fusion more completely realised than in the palace of Kouron Chesme, the home of Prince Sabah Eddin, nephew of the last Sultan of Turkey and deep student of Christian and Islamic tradition.

It was there that I first met Gurdjieff in the autumn of 1920, and no surroundings could have been more appropriate. In Gurdjieff, East and West do not just meet. Their difference is annihilated in a world outlook which knows no distinctions of race or creed. This was my first, and has remained one of my strongest impressions. A Greek from the Caucasus, he spoke Turkish with an accent of unexpected purity, the accent that one associates with those born and bred in the narrow circle of the Imperial Court. His appearance was striking enough even in Turkey where one saw many unusual types. His head was shaven, immense black moustache, eyes which at one moment seemed very pale and at another almost black. Below average height, he gave nevertheless an impression of great physical strength. The prince had apparently known him since before the war but did not tell me anything about their former meetings....

[The complete text is available in the [printed copy](#) of this issue.]

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Gurdjieff Chronology

by [James Moore](#)

APOLOGIA AND WARNING

The special difficulties of Gurdjieffian chronology seem likely to prevail over investigative scholarship. The very date of his birth is in dispute, although Gurdjieff himself stipulates 1866. Between then and 1912 we are chasteningly reliant on Gurdjieff's own four impressionistic accounts, which—in the nature of myth—are innocent of consistency, Aristotelian logic and chronological discipline. Notoriously problematical are 'the missing twenty years' from 1887 to 1907; the journals of the epoch's great Central Asian geographers (Sven Hedin, Sir Aurel Stein, Albert von Le Coq, Paul Pelliot and Count Kozui Otani) do not provide the collateral support for Gurdjieff's account which, here and there, might be expected. My chronology for this period is hence offered provisionally and I have not followed it slavishly in my relevant chapter, *The Long Search*. Nevertheless, punctuating Gurdjieff's narrative and certainly not offending it, are a few objective historical events which I differentiate by italicizing. Where Gurdjieff himself actually stipulates a date, I bracket in the chronology a source reference (using the simple code explained in the [References section](#)). Although from 1913 to 1949 our chronology appears to stand on the much firmer ground afforded by primary documents, independent witness, cross-reference, and reasonable inference, the difficulty remains that Gurdjieffian memoirists focus on interior content. For a school which places a premium on relationship, they seem (with the honourable exception of P. D. Ouspensky) strangely oblivious to the correlative value of an honest date.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1866 ?Jan.	G. born in Cappadocian Greek quarter of Alexandropol on Russian side of Russo-Turkish border.
1870–72	Birth of G.'s only brother Dmitri Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (?1870) and eldest sister (?1871).

- 1873 summer G.'s father Giorgios Giorgiades, impoverished when rinderpest wipes out his large cattle herd, opens a lumber-yard.
- 1874–76 Birth of two further sisters.
- 1877 Giorgiades' lumber-yard fails and he opens a small carpentry shop. G. precociously begins to contribute to family income. *Russia declares war on Turkey (24 Apr.) and captures Turkish border citadel town of Kars (18 Nov.)*.
- 1878 Giorgiades moves his family to Kars, and re-establishes his carpentry shop in the Greek quarter. Father Dean Borsh of Russian military cathedral assumes responsibility for G.'s private education, co-opting as tutors four graduates of the Theological Seminary. G. reads intensively in library of Kars military hospital.
- 1879–80 G. falls under moral influence of his tutor Dean Bogachevsky.
- 1881 G.'s eldest and favourite sister dies. G. narrowly escapes death in shooting accident on Lake Alageuz. He becomes fascinated by witnessing certain 'paranormal phenomena'.
- 1882 In an adolescent duel of sorts with Piotr Karpenko, G. narrowly escapes death on an artillery range.
- 1883 Leaving home, G. moves to Tiflis but fails to enter the Archdeacon's choir or the Georgian Theological Seminary. During breaks from casual work as a stoker for the Transcaucasian Railway Company, he makes pilgrimage on foot to Echmiadzin and studies for three months at Sanaine Monastery under Father Yevlampios. He develops close friendships with Sarkis Pogossian and Abram Yelov.
- 1884 G. crystallizes his motivational question as to significance of organic and human life.
- 1885 summer G. visits Constantinople (where he meets Ekim Bey) to study the Mevlevi and Bektashi dervishes. He returns to Alexandropol, where his parents now again live, via Hadji Bektash, Konya, and Aksehir.
- 1886 G. and Pogossian, digging haphazardly in the ruined city of Ani, find reference to the 'Sarmoung Brotherhood', supposedly a wisdom school founded in Babylon c. 2500 BC.

- 1887 As a courier of the Armenian protectionist society, the Armenakans, G. sets out with Pogossian for Kurdistan, quixotically resolved to 'find the Sarmoung'. En route however, his chance discovery near Zakho of a 'map of pre-sand Egypt' diverts him circuitously to Alexandria (where Pogossian leaves him). In Cairo, G. makes a strong bond with two elder seekers: Prince Yuri Lubovedsky and Professor Skridlov.
- 1888–9 G. visits Thebes with Lubovedsky; Abyssinia and the Sudan with Skridlov; and Mecca and Medina alone and in disguise. G. and Skridlov visit remains of Babylon at Nippur, Iraq. Returning to Constantinople, G. meets Vitvitskaia and escorts her to Russia.
- 1890–93 As a political envoy (probably of the newly constituted Armenian Social Revolutionary Party, the Dashnakzutun) G. visits Switzerland and subsequently bases himself in Rome.
- 1894–5 *Sultan Abdul Hamid II instigates massacre of Armenians throughout Turkey.* Again centred on Alexandropol, G. is prime mover in the foundation (1895) of the 'Seekers of Truth', a heterogeneous and youthful grouping seeking traditional and esoteric knowledge.
- 1896 G. goes to Crete, seeking traces of the ancient 'Imastun brotherhood', but also as an agent of the Ethniki Hetairia, a Hellenist Spartacist society. *The Greek population revolts (Feb.) against Turks.* While in the Sfakia region, G. is shot [\[TS7\]](#) and evacuated, unconscious, to Jerusalem. He recuperates at Alexandropol.
- 1897 Accompanying the Seekers of Truth, G. sets out [\[M183\]](#) from Nakhichevan (1 Jan.) through Turkestan to Tabriz and Baghdad (Expedition 1). (Episode of Ekim Bey and the Persian dervish.) To facilitate wider travels in Central Asia, G. becomes a Tsarist political agent and ? establishes some connection with the Buryat Mongol Agwhan Dordjieff, a high Tibetan official. With the Seekers G. travels from Orenburg through Sverdlovsk to Siberia (Expedition 2).

- 1898 In New Bokhara (Easter) G. befriends Soloviev a physical and social derelict. Guided blindfold by intermediaries on a twelve-day pony-trek from Bokhara, G. and Soloviev gain access to the chief Sarmoung Monastery (purported source of G.'s profoundest insights, symbolism and Sacred Dances). Unexpectedly they find Lubovedsky already there but in failing health. To G.'s sorrow, Lubovedsky promptly leaves to end his days under spiritual supervision elsewhere. Following a period of monastic study, G. explores the Gobi (?Taklamakan) desert with Skridlov and the Seekers of Truth (Expedition 3). After Soloviev's accidental death [\[M165\]](#), G. returned to Keriya Oasis.
- 1899 G. stays in Merv. In dervish disguise he and Skridlov travel up the river Amu Darya (Oxus) into Kafiristan. (Episode of Skridlov and Father Giovanni.) G. returns to Baku and studies Persian magic. In Ashkhabad he and Vitvitskaia (only woman member of the Seekers) earn large sums with his 'Universal Traveling Workshop'.
- 1900 G. sets out (2 Jan.) from Chardzhou with Seekers (Expedition 4) through the Pamirs to India [\[M252\]](#). (Episode of Karpenko and the *ez-ezounavouron*.) The Seekers then disband and separate.
- 1901 ? G. presented to Tsar Nicholas II (23 July) in Livadia. ? Disguised as a Transcaspian Buddhist, G. enters Upper Tibet and studies with the 'Red Hat' Lamas. ? He marries a Tibetan.
- 1902 Shot a second time [\[TS9\]](#) during a mountain clan affray, G. recovers in the Yangi Hissar oasis on the edge of the Taklamakan desert. He takes an oath to abjure hypnotism and animal magnetism except for scientific and altruistic purposes.
- 1903 G. returns to Tibet. *Col. Francis Younghusband invades Tibet (5 Jul.) from India.*
- 1904 *British massacre Tibetans at Guru (31 Mar.) Younghusband enters Lhasa (3 Aug.)*. Anguished at the untimely killing of an initiated lama, G. resolves to combat the mass suggestibility and hysteria which occasion wars. Hydropsy obliges him to leave Tibet and return to his parents in Alexandropol. Having recuperated, G. sets out again (winter) for Central Asia but, near the Chiatura railway tunnel, is accidentally shot a third time [\[TS9\]](#) in a skirmish between Cossacks and Gourians. With difficulty he goes via Ashkabad to Yangi Hissar where he again recuperates.

- 1905–7 ?After two years in an indeterminate Central Asian Sufi community, G. settles in Tashkent, the Uzbek capital of Russian Turkestan. He briefly visits Samara, comforting Vitvitskaia on her deathbed.
- 1908–10 Based in Tashkent as a 'Professor-instructor' in supernatural sciences, G. begins teaching in a deliberately charlatanesque mode, while studying the reaction among his Europeanized Russian 'guinea-pigs'. He amasses considerable wealth by trading in oil, fish, cattle, carpets, cloisonné, etc. Slowly he gravitates west towards metropolitan Russia.
- 1911 G. synthesizes disparate stands of accumulated knowledge into a cohesive system employing a special and at points quasi-scientific, vocabulary. On 13 Sept. he renews his oath [\[H11\]](#) to abjure hypnotism, etc., binding himself for twenty-one years to lead an 'artificial life'.
- 1912 c. New Year G. arrives in Moscow and attracts his first associates (his cousin Sergei Mercourov, Vladimir Pohl, and Rachmilievitch). ? G. marries Julia Ostrowska in St Petersburg.
- mid. G. reads *Tertium Organum*, identifying its author [P. D. Ouspensky](#) as a prospective pupil.
- 1913 In St Petersburg, under the assumed name of 'Prince Ozay', G. cultivates Lev Lvovitch (? and Shamzaran Badmieff).
- winter In St Petersburg G. informally takes his first English pupil, the musical student Paul Dukes.
- 1914 spring In St Petersburg (having abandoned 'Prince Ozay' persona) G. interests Dr Leonid Stjoernval.
- Aug. 1 *Germany declares war on Russia. (St Peterburg renamed Petrograd on Sept. 1).*
- Nov. 13 [G. advertises his ballet, *The Struggle of the Magicians, in Golos Moskvi* \(attracting Ouspensky's attention\).](#)
- Dec. G. supervises his pupils' writing of sketch, *Glimpses of Truth*.
- 1915 April In Moscow G. accepts Ouspensky as pupil. (A week later Ouspensky returns to Petrograd.)
- autumn G. intermittently visits Petrograd where he lectures and meets Ouspensky and his associates.

- 1916 Feb.–Aug. Period of concentrated activity: increasingly centred on Petrograd, G. conveys virtually his entire 'System' of ideas to a group which expands from six (incl. Stjoernval, Ouspensky, and Andrei Zaharoff) to thirty.
- Aug. On a visit to Finland, G. promotes in Ouspensky an intense telepathic experience.
- c. Dec. 16 In Petrograd G. accepts as pupil the composer, [Thomas de Hartmann](#) (and in Feb. 1917 his wife Olga).
- 1917 Feb. 23 Parting from his pupils, a 'transfigured' G. finally leaves Petrograd, setting out via Moscow for Alexandropol with Julia Ostrowska.
- Mar. 16 *Revolution: forced abdication of Tsar Nicholas II; formation of Kerensky government.*
- Mar.–Jun. G. lives in retirement with his family in Alexandropol.
- Jul. (early) G. sets out for Petrograd but on reconsideration settles in Essentuki in Caucasus.
- Jul.–Aug. With thirteen pupils summoned from Moscow and Petrograd (incl. Ouspensky and Zaharoff), G. undertakes six weeks' intensive psycho-somatic experimentation at Essentuki.
- Aug. (end) The de Hartmanns join G. at Essentuki. Ouspensky's trust in G. begins to waver. G. moves to Tuapse on Black Sea Coast.
- Aug.–Dec. G. and his nucleus (augmented in Oct. by Dr and Mme Stjoernval) wander up and down Black Sea coast to avoid embroilment in Civil War. 7 Nov. (OS 26 Oct.) *Bolshevik revolution brings Lenin to power.*
- 1918 spring G. returns to Essentuki (Jan.). Perceiving Alexandropol as under Turkish threat, G. invites his family to join him (all comply except his father and eldest sister); he summons his pupils (12 Feb.) and begins intensive work. Ouspensky separates from G. (Mar.).
- Jul. (mid) G.'s eldest sister and her family reach him in Essentuki as refugees, bringing news that Turks have shot his father in Alexandropol on 15 May.
- Jul. (late) As Essentuki becomes increasingly threatened by Civil War, G. plants a fabricated newspaper story of his forthcoming 'scientific expedition' to Mount Induc.

- Aug. 6 Posing as a scientist, G. leaves Essentuki with a following of fourteen (which does not include G.'s family or Ouspensky). They go by train to Maikop where hostilities detain them three weeks.
- Aug.–Sept. Crossing Red and White lines five times, G. leads his party on foot over northern Caucasus range to Black Sea port of Sochi (where many pupils, incl. Zaharoff, leave him).
- 1919 Jan. (mid) G., with his residual nucleus (Mme Ostrowska, the Stjoernvals, and the de Harmanns), voyages south from Sochi to Poti, They entrain for the Georgian capital Tbilisi, where they settle.
- spring G. meets and accepts as pupils the artist [Alexandre Salzman](#) and his wife Jeanne (Easter). Prompted by the arrival in Tbilisi of his brother Dmitri, G. sends Olga de Harmann (early May) on a return trip to Essentuki to retrieve possessions and carry messages.
- summer In collaboration with [Jeanne Salzman](#), G. gives first public demonstration of his Sacred Dances (Movements in Tbilisi Opera House (22 Jun.). He summers in Borjom (Jul.–Aug.).
- autumn Having returned to Tbilisi, G. constitutes (mid–Sept.) his Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man (founder members: Dr Leonid Stjoernval, Thomas and Olga de Hartmann, Alexandre and Jeanne Salzman, and ? Julia Ostrowska).
- winter G. continues to teach his 'System' under the auspices of the Georgian Menshevik social democratic republic. After accepting Elizabeta Galumnian and Olga Hinzenberg ('Olgivanna') as pupils, G. begins intensive work on *The Struggle of the Magicians*.
- 1920 spring *Marked deterioration in socio-political conditions in Georgia, and in viability of G.'s Institute. He accepts as pupil Major Frank Pinder (Mar.).*
- May (late) G. leads a party of thirty pupils on foot from Tbilisi to Black Sea port of Batoum, where they embark for Constantinople (Istanbul).
- Jun. G. settles in Constantinople (7 Jun.) and rents an apartment in Koumbaradji Street in Péra. Ouspensky (in Constantinople since Feb.) confides his own group of pupils to G.
- Jun.–Aug. With Ouspensky and Thomas de Hartmann respectively, G. works on the scenario and music of *The Struggle of the Magicians*; they study the ceremony of the Mevlevi dervishes.

- Sept. G. rents substantial accommodation at 13 Abdullatif Yemeneci Sokak near the Galata Tower.
- Oct. G. re-animates his Institute, giving public lectures and semi-public rehearsals of the Sacred Dances. (Ouspensky disassociates himself and withdraws to Prinkipo.)
- Nov. (mid) G. learns that his sister Anna Anastasieff and all her children (excepting her son Valentin) have just been massacred by Turks at Baytar.
- Dec. Thanks to Alexandre Salzman, G. receives a letter from Jacques-Dalcroze in Geneva, inviting him to settle at Hellerau near Dresden. G. accepts and applies for visas.
- 1921 Jan. (early) G. renews contact with the Sultan's nephew, Prince Mehmet Sabaheddin, and briefly meets Capt. J. G. Bennett.
- May (mid) Following several months of declining public interest, G. closes his Institute and retires to the island of Prinkipo.
- Aug. On receipt of visas, G. with his nucleus travels by train from Turkey to Germany; departs Constantinople (13th); arrives Sofia, Bulgaria (15th); arrives Belgrade, Serbia (16th); arrives Budapest, Hungary (17th) and departs (21st); transits Czechoslovakia and arrives Berlin (22nd). (Around this time, Ouspensky leaves Constantinople for London but his wife Sophie chooses to accompany G.)
- Sept. Having settled in the suburb on Schmargendorf, G. adopts Olga de H. as his private secretary.
- Nov. 24 In Berlin G. gives his inaugural lecture in Europe.
- winter Accompanied by the Salzmanns, G. visits the Dalcroze Institute at Hellerau, and through Harald Dohrn seeks part possession; a legal case ensues.
- 1922 Feb. 13 G. pays his first brief visit to London, capturing the allegiance of Ouspensky's many prominent pupils, notably the editor [A. R. Orage](#).
- Mar. 15 On G.'s second and last visit to London, he confirms his ascendancy and clashes with Ouspensky. While influential pupils seek UK residential status for G., he returns to Berlin.
- Late spring G. issues his third prospectus in English, German, and French.
- Jun. G. loses civil action to acquire Hellerau possession, and is effectively barred from settling in Britain.

- Jul. 14 G. brings his pupils from Germany to Paris, hires facilities at the Dalcroze Institute, and delegates Olga de H. to seek a large property.
- Oct. 1 On the basis of generous financial help from England, G. acquires and moves to his most famous seat: the [Prieuré des Basses Loges at Fontainebleau-Avon](#).
- Oct. G. is simultaneously occupied with Prieuré administration and Parisian business ventures. On 17 Oct. he accepts as a permanent Prieuré guest the terminally ill new Zealand authoress Katherine Mansfield.
- Nov. G. begins intense work on the Sacred Dances. At end of Nov. he institutes the building of a large Study House in the Prieuré grounds.
- Dec. 16 G. averts a major fire at the Prieuré.
- 1923 Jan. G. acquires notoriety after Katherine Mansfield dies (9th) and is buried on the same day (12th) that the Study House is opened.
- Feb. Reporters (notably E. C. Bowyer) and academics (notably Prof. Denis Saurat) interview G. at the Prieuré and produce popular but not unsympathetic accounts.
- May G. learns to drive. At his new Paris apartment, 9 Rue du Commandant-Marchand, he entertains Ezra Pound.
- summer G.'s 'open evenings' of his music, Sacred Dances, etc., given in the Prieuré Study House, are regularly attended by local dignitaries and occasionally by cultural figures, e.g. Diaghilev and Sinclair Lewis.
- Dec. Although fatigued, G. produces his first major public demonstration of Sacred Dances in Europe. Premiered (16th) at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, it has a mixed reception. G. extricates his mother and sister from Russia and domiciles them at the Prieuré.
- 1924 spring With *c.* thirty-five pupil-dancers, G. sails (4 Jan.) on the s.s. *Paris* for America, where public demonstrations in New York (Jan.–Feb.) and Philadelphia, Boston, and Chicago (Mar.) secure the interest of significant new pupils (notably Margaret Anderson, Muriel Draper, [Jane Heap](#), Gorham Munson, C. S. Nott, and Jean Toomer). G. founds New York branch of his Institute (8 Apr.).

- summer G. returns to France (Jun.). He loses occupancy of Commandant-Marchand and acquires a new apartment at 47 Boulevard Peréire. Driving alone from Paris to Fontainebleau, G. has a near fatal motor-car crash (8 Jul.). Nursed by his wife and mother, he makes a slow and painful recovery—against medical expectation. Still convalescent, G. formally 'disbands' his Institute (26 Aug.) but in fact disperses only his less dedicated pupils.
- autumn– winter G. empowers Orage to supervise the Work in America (Oct.). Having resolved in future to propagate his ideas by writing, G. commences (16 Dec.) his magnum opus: *Beelzebub*.
- 1925 Mar. Orage's report that the first installment of *Beelzebub* in unintelligible, heralds G.'s long stylistic struggle.
- summer G.'s mother dies of chronic liver disease at the Prieuré (end Jun.). G. begins intensive period of musical composition with Thomas de Hartmann (29 Jul.).
- winter G.'s wife Mme Ostrowska contracts cancer. Neither orthodox radiotherapy nor G.'s unorthodox treatment gives satisfactory results.
- 1926 Jan. 8 Mabel Dodge Luhan offers G. substantial property at Taos, New Mexico, but (1 Feb.) he declines.
- Feb.–Jun. G. struggles intensely but unavailingly for Julia Ostrowska's life but she dies (26 Jun.). Ouspensky attends her funeral.
- Jul. Aleister Crowley briefly visits Prieuré and G. emphatically repudiates him.
- 1927 spring Short of money, G. is obliged to relinquish his flat in Boulevard Péreire (16 Apr.). G. culminates his musical collaboration with Thomas de Hartmann (1 May).
- summer Many American pupils and voyeurists visit Prieuré. G. meets, but fails to impress, his future secretary Solita Solano. He repudiates the poet Waldo Frank.
- autumn Convinced by a serious decline in health that he has insufficient time to undertake a necessary and radical revision of *Beelzebub* he undergoes a crisis (6 Nov.) and contemplates suicide.
- 1928 Jan. (mid) A. R. Orage, accompanied by his young bride Jessie, makes a brief, stormy, and final visit to the Prieuré.

- May 5 To stimulate his writing G. vows to 'banish' on various pretexts all those who make his life too comfortable.
- summer (early) G. encourages senior pupils away on extended visits: Mme Ouspensky to England, and the Salzmans to Frankfurt. He discourages Jane Heap from settling at the Prieuré, but mandates her to start an 'artists' group' in Montmartre.
- summer (late) Alexandre Salzmann defends G. against ideological attacks of French occultist René Guénon.
- autumn Provisionally satisfied with *Beelzebub*, G. commences his second book *Meetings*.
- 1929 Jan. Accompanied only by the de Hartmanns, G. embarks on s.s *Paris* for his second visit to America. They resist his promptings to make independent lives.
- spring Between arrival in New York (23 Jan.) and departure for France (5 Apr.) G. renews contacts with pupils and amasses funds.
- summer (early) G. again prompts Mme Ouspensky to visit England. He finally prevails on the de Hartmanns to leave the Prieuré and helps them settle in Courbevoie. He appoints Louise Goepfert as his secretary (Jun.).
- autumn G. facilitates the departure of Fritz Peters from the Prieuré (Sept.). On visits to Frankfurt and Berlin with Louise Goepfert and Olga de Hartmann, G. intentionally alienates Olga. *The Wall Street stock market crash (Oct.) affects G.'s American followers.*
- 1930 spring After burning all his personal papers, and engineering a painful and final parting from Olga de Hartmann, G. sails (Feb.) aboard s.s. *Bremen* on his third trip to America. In New York he intentionally creates difficulties, sabotaging negotiations with Alfred Knopf to publish *Beelzebub*. He sails for France (Apr.) leaving Orage disillusioned.
- autumn (late) In Paris Alexandre Salzmann attracts René Daumal (subsequently G.'s first French pupil).
- winter On a fourth trip to America, G. effectively breaks with Orage. Arriving in New York (13 Nov.), he demands (1 Dec.) of Orage's pupils that they repudiate their teacher. Orage himself returns (10 Dec.) from holiday in England and surprisingly endorses G.'s action, repudiating himself. G. leaves for Chicago (29 Dec.).

- 1931
- Jan. Returning to New York, G. has an inconclusive encounter with certain intellectuals, including John Watson, the behaviourist.
- Mar. 13 After a final parting from Orage, G. sails for France, leaving the American groups in disarray.
- spring G. briefly receives Thornton Wilder at the Prieuré.
- summer G. refuses Ouspensky access to the Prieuré, creating a final breach. Mme Ouspensky leaves Asnières and moves permanently to England.
- autumn G. is involved in a theatrical incident with a revolver.
- winter G. sails (Nov.) on fifth, brief visit to the USA, focusing on Jean Toomer's Chicago group. In New York the author-adventurer Nadir Khan ('Achmed Abdullah') mistakes G. for the Lama Agwhan Dordjjeff.
- 1932
- Jan. 16 G. sails for Cherbourg on the s.s. *Bremen*.
- Feb. In Paris G. is approached by the American lesbian authoress, Kathryn Hulme, a member of Jane Heap's group; he shows her the Prieuré, now run down.
- May 11 G. supervises the enforced closure of the Prieuré and dispersal of its final occupants; he takes a room in the Grand Hôtel, adjoining the Café de la Paix.
- Aug. Orage refuses an opportunity to renew contact with G.
- Sept. 13 G. begins drafting his controversial, autobiographical tract *Herald*.
- winter On a disastrous sixth visit to America G. gives an impression of venality, alienating Jean Toomer and his Chicago group.
- 1933
- Mar. 7 G. writes bizarre 'Supplementary Announcement' to *Herald*.
- Apr. Alexandre Salzman, critically ill, meets G. at the Café Henri IV in Fontainebleau.
- May? G. loses the Prieuré irrevocably after the mortgagees foreclose.
- autumn G. commences his seventh visit to the USA. From his apartment at the Henry Hudson Hotel, he renews contact with New York pupils of Orage.

- 1934 spring Death of Alexandre Gustav Salzmann (3 Mar.). G. visits the Chicago groups (May), intentionally alienating Fritz Peters on the train journey.
- summer G. pays an extended visit to Olgivanna at Taliesin, Wisconsin (Jun.–Jul.), deeply impressing her husband Frank Lloyd Wright. Mabel Dodge Luhan refuses G.'s request (18 Aug.) for the ranch she originally volunteered in Jan. 1926. Back in New York (Sept.), G. gives two unfortunate interviews to the popular writer Rom Landau.
- autumn– winter G. repudiates *Herald* and calls in all copies (Oct.). Shocked to learn of Orage's death (5 Nov.), and wishing to avoid a spate of empty condolences, G. travels to Washington, Boston, Chicago and certain Southern States.
- 1935 Jan. G. returns to New York.
- Apr.–May Conjectural events attend G.'s completion (9 Apr.) of the Prologue to *Life is Real*. He travels to Washington anticipating, from a Senator Bronson Cutting, generous financial support to repurchase the Prieuré. Profoundly depressed when Cutting dies (6 May) in an air crash, G. applies unsuccessfully to return to Russia. Doubly disappointed, he abandons writing and disappears.
- Jun.–Aug. G. makes putative but unsubstantiated journeys to? Germany, Leningrad and Central Asia.
- Sept. Rom Landau publishes his bestseller *God is My Adventure*, vilifying G. and confusing him with Dordjieff.
- Oct. G. reappears in Paris. Jane Heap moves (18th) from Paris to London. Three of her American women pupils immediately gravitate to G. who constitutes his first Parisian group (21st) in Hôtel Napoleon Bonaparte.
- Christmas G. takes new apartment in Rue Labie near the Salle Pleyel.
- 1936 spring G. constitutes '[The Rope](#)' (early Jan.), an exclusively lesbian group meeting in Rue Labie (initially comprising Elizabeth Gordon, Solita Solano, Kathryn Hulme and 'Wendy'.) He makes many tours by car to European locales.
- Jun. G. gives Georgette Leblanc, Margaret Anderson and Monique entrée to his current work, though not to 'The Rope'.

- Jul. (end) Having temporarily suspended group work with his lesbian pupils, G. makes his first token contact with René Daumal and Jeanne de Salzman's Sèrves group.
- Aug. Unable to afford a château he has located on the Marne, G. moves to a small Paris apartment at 6 Rue des Colonels Rénard.
- winter On reconvening his lesbian group (Oct.), G. finds Georgette Leblanc seriously ill, but he alleviates her condition.
- 1937 spring G. resumes extensive car trips. His brother Dmitri contracts cancer.
- Aug. Dmitri dies, despite G.'s effort to help him.
- autumn 'The Rope' and subsidiary lesbian groupings effectively dissolve (as Kathryn Hulme and Wendy settle in America, and Anderson and Leblanc in Normandy). Solita Solano becomes G.'s secretary.
- 1938 Dr Leonid Stjoernval dies near Reims. (Apr.). As Jeanne de Salzman adds the author Luc Dietrich to her existing circle of pupils (René and Vera Daumal, Philippe Lavastine, Henri and Henriette Tracol, etc.), G. implicitly confirms her as his deputy.
- 1939 spring Accompanied by Solita Solano, G. sails (Mar.) on s.s. *Paris* on his brief penultimate trip to America. *The international crisis steadily worsens*. Having resisted pressure to settle in New Jersey, G. sails (19 May) on s.s. *Normandie* for France.
- summer G. contemplates trip to England to assist Mme Ouspensky medically, but Ouspensky disapproves and the plan is dropped.
- autumn *Outbreak (1 Sept.) of the Second World War*. G. remains in Paris (throughout War) at 6 Rue des Colonels Rénard, which he stocks with provisions.
- 1940 spring Jeanne de Salzman's group, meeting at 54 Rue du Four, grows in size and influence. G. consolidates his contact with Philippe Lavastine and René Daumal.
- Jun. *With Allied resistance collapsing*, G.'s followers attempt (12th) to relocate him in the countryside but he returns to 6 Rue des Colonels Rénard (14th) *just as Germans occupy Paris*.
- winter Food being scarce and the weather exceptionally harsh, G. begins helping an extended family of needy neighbors. Jeanne de Salzman formally presents her French group to G. (Oct.).

- 1941 G.'s French group meeting at 6 Rue des Colonels Rénard enlarges. *Hitler's invasion of Russia (22 Jun.) and America's declaration of war on Germany (11 Dec.) predicate the ultimate liberation of Paris.* Georgette Leblanc dies (20 Oct.) of cancer.
- 1942 spring To obtain further credit, G. fabricates story that he has been give a Texas oil-well.
- May 29 G. advises his Jewish pupils to 'go underground' when *the Germans oblige them to wear the yellow Star of David.* They are harboured by Christian group members.
- Jun. (late) Jeanne de Salzman presents Luc Dietrich to G.
- Jul. 16–17 G.'s advice is vindicated as *Parisian Jews are deported in 'Operation spring Wind'.* René and Vera Daumal no longer have access to G.
- Nov. *Germans overrun France's Unoccupied Zone.*
- 1943 Further influx of French pupils. G. active in teaching enneagram-based Movements at the Salle Pleyel and developing his ritual 'Toasts to the Idiots'.
- 1944 Death of René Daumal (21 May) and Luc Dietrich (12 Aug.) precedes *liberation of Paris (25 Aug.)*. In autumn G. is arrested for currency offences but discharged.
- 1945 *Hitler's suicide (30 Apr.) and VE Day (6 May).* G. receives first visits of American pupils (Kathryn Hulme and Fritz Peters). He attracts unwarranted criticism over the death of Irène-Carole Reweliotty (11 Aug.) *Japan's surrender (14 Aug.) ends war.* Lise Tracol becomes G.'s residential housekeeper.
- 1946 G.'s relationship with Katherine Mansfield is pilloried in the magazines *l'Illustration* (19 Jan.). First influx of London pupils to Paris from Jane Heap's group.
- 1947 Ouspensky returns to England (Jan.) from America. G. invites him to Paris but Ouspensky declines. When Ouspensky dies (2 Oct.) Mme Ouspensky, still at Mendham, makes overtures to G.
- 1948 Jan. Mme Ouspensky advises her husband's British followers at Lyne to contact G.

- summer G. summons Ouspensky's pupils (Jun.) but they still vacillate. He reintegrates J. G. Bennett in his work (after twenty-five years) and cures his wife Winifred (Aug.). G. recovers astonishingly after serious injury in a car crash (8 Aug.) and promptly issues a general invitation to Paris: pupils of Jane Heap, Ouspensky, Mme Ouspensky, Orage, Bennett (but not Nicoll) commingle with French.
- winter Eager to buy the château de Voisins and to publish *Beelzebub*, G. sails for New York (arr. 17 Dec.). Here he raises funds and authorizes Mme Ouspensky to publish *Fragments*.
- 1949 spring Announcing *Beelzebub's* imminent publication, G. nominates three literary executors (J. G. Bennett, Lord Pentland, and René Zuber). He sails for France (Feb.) in *Queen Mary* with large entourage (including Iovanna Lloyd Wright).
- summer G. makes car expeditions to Vichy (Jun.); Geneva (Jul.) to meet Mme Stjoernval; and finally Montignac (Aug.) to see the Lascaux cave paintings. His ideas are favourably mentioned on Italian radio in connection with the Montessori system.
- Sept. G. announces he will sail for New York on 20 Oct.; he buys La Grand Paroisse, ostensibly as a new centre.
- Oct. Under intense pressures G.'s health fails. Having choreographed (No. 39) his last Movement (11th), he collapses at Movements class (14th). Nursed by Lise Tracol and surrounded by doctors, his condition fluctuates. Receipt of *Beelzebub's* proofs (21st) suggests the apotheosis of his life's work. Seriously ill, he supervises the Toasts to the Idiots for the last time (24th). He is taken by ambulance to the American Hospital at Neuilly (26th), where Dr Welch performs an abdominal puncture. G. gives his final instructions to Jeanne de Salzman (27th), becomes unconscious (28th), and dies around 10.30am (29th). Religious services are held on successive days.
- Nov. 3 G. is buried in the family plot at Fontainebleau-Avon. Under the leadership of Jeanne de Salzman, his groups re-dedicate themselves to practise and transmit his ideas.

Key to References [Excerpt]

H *The Herald of Coming Good*

M [*Meetings with Remarkable Men*](#)

TS [*Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am"*](#)

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This chronology is reproduced from [*Gurdjieff: the Anatomy of a Myth*](#) by permission of the author James Moore, founder of the [Gurdjieff Studies Group](#), a small London (UK) centred group practising Gurdjieff's teaching on traditional lines.

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Featured: [Fall 1997 Issue, Vol. I \(1\)](#)

Revision: April 1, 2000



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Gurdjieff

An Original Teacher

by [J. Walter Driscoll](#) and [George Baker](#)

Gurdjieff was an abrupt awakener. Since his death in 1949, his ideas, teachings, writings, music and contemplative dances or gymnastics called 'Movements' continue to provide opportunity for essential insight in the never-ending, moment by moment struggle for self-knowledge and self-understanding. Gurdjieff summons us to transformation by showing how to focus our attention on the reality of our inner being and the outer life it attracts.

On January 13, 1949, Gurdjieff was in New York City and announced (on what proved to be his last birthday) his decision to publish [Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson](#). This was a complete departure from the practice he had followed for almost four decades of expounding his teaching orally and circulating his writings privately. He died on October 29 of that year, hardly a week after receiving the publisher's proofs for *Beelzebub's Tales*....

[The complete text is available in the [printed copy](#) of this issue.]

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

John Pentland

1907–1984

by J. Walter Driscoll

Lord Pentland (Henry John Sinclair) was a pupil of both P.D. and Mme. Ouspensky for many years during the 1930s and 1940s. He spent considerable time in 1949, the last year of Gurdjieff's life, with him; then he led the Gurdjieff Work in North America. He described this period in *Transmission: an interview with Lord Pentland* in 1983:

When I met Gurdjieff I'd been quite a few years with Mr. Ouspensky and Mme. Ouspensky both attending talks and lectures and also living in Mme. Ouspensky's house, in their houses in England in the west of London and in New Jersey. And it was after Ouspensky died and I went out to India, and on the way back, actually, it became clear to me that even all those years with Ouspensky, I hadn't arrived at anything; I came to nothing. And it was then that through Mme. Ouspensky's introduction, I went to Paris and met Gurdjieff. I was with him in Paris and then I came to New York. And it was a short period, only about nine months, but a couple of months after that he died. And the way he left things, it made it perfectly easy for me to have to really enter into a position of responsibility as such. So it made it essentially easy for me to try to understand more deeply what he'd shown me.

With support from other senior students, Lord Pentland became president of the [Gurdjieff Foundation](#) when it was established in New York in 1953 and remained in that position until his death in 1984. He played a major role in bringing English editions of Gurdjieff's and Ouspensky's books to publication. He also collaborated in the founding of Gurdjieff societies in major urban areas across North America. Lord Pentland was president of the Gurdjieff Foundation of California from its inception in 1955.

As executive editor of Far West Editions between 1969 and 1984 he supervised and was a frequent but anonymous contributor to ten issues of *Material for Thought*, an occasional magazine of anonymously authored reviews, essays, interviews and poetry that is dedicated to "the inner search for one's self." In this capacity, he acted as editorial advisor to numerous authors and wrote forewords to some of their books published by Far West Editions. As founder of the Far West Institute, he was a

pivotal force behind their biennial program of six public lectures in San Francisco between 1974 and 1984. These drew a wide range of gifted speakers, from many vocations and traditions, to penetrating dialogues on their search for meaning in the midst of contemporary materialism. Lord Pentland was a frequent contributor to these discussions.

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Gurdjieff Home Page

Winter 1997/1998 Issue, Vol. I No. 2

Editorial Introduction

It is our whim to make this the best general website available on Gurdjieff. Lest you misinterpret our intention or ‘whim’ as flippant and frivolous, please let us share one of our favorite anecdotes...

Commentary on *Beelzebub's Tales*

Commentary by Terry Winter Owens and Suzanne D. Smith first issued by University Books in their *Mystic Arts Book News*, No. 78, 1964. Reprinted here by kind permission of the authors.

“Despite all the inherent difficulties which Gurdjieff has implanted in the book—complexities in writing and in concepts, the rewards are there also. But in keeping with Gurdjieff’s philosophy, the rewards are commensurate with the reader’s struggle to find them.”

Commentary on *Meetings with Remarkable Men*

Commentary by Terry Winter Owens first issued by University Books in their *Mystic Arts Book News*, No. 82, 1965. Reprinted here by permission of the author. “It is an adventure of the mind—growing, being formed, setting out after inner knowledge, discovering it and putting it to the test of practice. Thus it is an adventure in two worlds, and it will be the reader’s delight and enrichment to discern where one world ends and the other begins.”

The Struggle to “Fathom the Gist” of *Beelzebub's Tales*



“One of the best means of rendering ineffective the predisposition present in your nature of the crystallization of the consequences of the properties of the organ Kundabuffer is ‘intentional suffering;’ and the greatest intentional suffering can be obtained in your presences if you compel yourselves to be able to endure the ‘displeasing manifestations of others towards yourselves.’”

G. I. Gurdjieff

“If you have not by nature a critical mind your staying here is useless.”

G. I. Gurdjieff

[Sample Only]

An essay from Terry Winter Owens published here first. “For over 30 years, I have wanted to write a follow up to the essay on Gurdjieff’s *All and Everything*, that I wrote in the 1960s.... Writing now from a different perspective, I want to specially focus on Gurdjieff’s ‘friendly advice’ to the reader and some issues that arose from a consideration of that advice.”

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January 1, 1998

Gurdjieff’s Philosophy of Nature

[Sample Only]

An earlier version of this extended essay was first published in English in *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching* edited by J. Needleman and G. Baker. Nicolescu offers a preliminary, but bold and rigorous, examination of a clear relationship between Gurdjieff’s cosmological mythos and current evidence for leading theories in physics and cosmology.

No Harem: Gurdjieff and the Women of The Rope

Rob Baker sketches a group of strong-willed women, mostly writers who also happened to be lesbians, that Gurdjieff worked with from 1936—including Solita Solano, Kathryn Hulme, Margaret Anderson, Jane Heap, and Georgette Leblanc. First published here, Baker draws on the extensive research he is conducting for a forthcoming book on *The Rope*.

Jane Heap (1887–1964)

A bio-sketch and selection of Heap’s aphorisms by Rob Baker published here first. Outlines Heaps’ life-long literary influence and forty years devoted to presenting Gurdjieff’s teaching to groups in London & Paris from 1924; then at Gurdjieff’s wish, in London from 1935 until her death.

Great Harmonizer Tuning Up

[Sample Only]

New York Sun, January 27, 1931. A journalist's account of his puzzling luncheon with Gurdjieff and his "staff" in their New York apartments and a reading from the typescript of *Beelzebub's Tales*.

G. Gurdjieff Explains

[Sample Only]

A letter to the *New York World*, February 6, 1931. Gurdjieff explains that his current visit to America is in connection with his writing the second series.

Gurdjieff and the Armenian Boy Sarkis

This anecdote recounted by Jeanne de Salzman was first published in *All My Yesterdays: an autobiography* by Cecil Lewis on pp. 174–176.



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

All and Everything Beelzebub's Tales To His Grandson

**Commentary by Terry Winter Owens and
Suzanne D. Smith**

This book is without doubt one of the most extraordinary books ever published. Its title is no exaggeration, for the book not only touches on all and every conceivable subject, but it also *is* all and everything—that is, a collection of science fiction tales, an allegory, a satire, a philosophical treatise, a sociological essay, an introduction to psychology, a cryptogram and, for those who follow Gurdjieff's teachings, a bible. It is a highly unusual mixture of entertainment and esotericism, humor and seriousness, obscurity and clarity.

GEORGE IVANOVITCH GURDJIEFF ranks among the most controversial men of the 20th century, and he may well be one of the most important. He was born in 1877 of Greek ancestry in Russian Armenia and died in Paris in 1949. As a young man he devoted his energies to searching for the fundamental truths of life. He traveled extensively throughout the East, sometimes gaining entrance to esoteric schools that few, if any, Westerners had ever been admitted to. He became convinced that there was a way for man to become much more than what he is. He then set about putting what he had learned into a form that would be understandable and meaningful to the Western world. He developed a method whereby a man could evolve through his own efforts. The basis of the method seems simple enough—to observe oneself objectively, impartially and at each moment. But the execution of it is extremely difficult, which led to it being called "the Work." Through efforts "to work on oneself" and increase one's self-awareness or consciousness, Gurdjieff maintains that a man can develop new faculties which, because they are based on objectivity and impartiality, enable man to function harmoniously. Gurdjieff believes, unlike many religious philosophers, that man has to develop a soul—he is not born with it—and these new faculties contribute to the development of the soul. He presented his ideas in three forms—lectures and writing, music, and sacred dances and movements to correspond to the three main areas of man—his intellect, his emotions, and his physical body. What was possibly most important and unique about Gurdjieff was that he was a living example of what his method could produce. Even people who didn't like him had to admit that here was a man in control of himself, a man who operated from the inside out rather than being in the

power of external influences like most men.

It is fortunate that he put his ideas in writing, because throughout history we can see what has happened when wise men have entrusted the dissemination of their teachings solely to their disciples. Distortions, disagreements and even reversals are inevitably the final result. This is not to say that many of the books written about the ideas and method of Gurdjieff are not quite good. Ouspensky's [*In Search of the Miraculous*](#), Kenneth Walker's [*A Study of Gurdjieff's Teachings*](#), and C. Daly King's [*The States of Human Consciousness*](#) are excellent introductions to Gurdjieff and his ideas. But these are secondhand and consequently not as complete or as accurate as something coming directly from Gurdjieff himself.

Because the book is so unique, the reading of it does present certain challenges. Gurdjieff suggests that *All and Everything* be read three times, and not until the third reading should the reader try to fathom the gist of it. However, this does not mean that a tremendous amount cannot be gleaned from the first reading. A good guide to understanding the book is the section "From the Author" at the very end. Here Gurdjieff steps out of his role as storyteller and talks to the reader directly.

Another guide is to keep in mind Gurdjieff's purpose in writing *All and Everything*, which he states in no uncertain terms: to destroy mercilessly all man's beliefs and views about everything existing in the world. To reinforce this aim, Gurdjieff selects a most diabolical name for his hero—the name of the devil himself—Beelzebub. However, *All and Everything* is not like so many philosophy books that brilliantly show man what a farce he is and then leave it at that. Its exposé of man is not an end in itself, but rather a beginning. Gurdjieff sets out to destroy only in order to create. He believes that before man can proceed to uncover and develop his hidden possibilities, he must first question the condition in which he is, must feel dissatisfaction, must have an inkling that there is more to life than what the senses perceive.

Two other important points to keep in mind are the sub-title, "An Objectively Impartial Criticism of Man," which implies this is no ordinary criticism, and Gurdjieff's statement that the book is written "according to entirely new principles of logical reasoning." It is impossible to explore here all the ramifications of these two points, but they mean that Gurdjieff does not propose palliative measures of reform nor does he present his arguments in a traditional way. He makes it clear that mankind cannot be "worked on" from the outside; that is, things like war or disease cannot be eliminated even through the best forms of legislation or science or artistic endeavors. The only possible solution is that enough men embark on a road leading to higher states of consciousness.

Probably the biggest challenge in reading the book lies in its richness of content. What is said can be taken on so many different levels, and it is often hard to know how to go about deciphering it. In general, it could be said that Gurdjieff is working on the hypothesis "as above, so below." Thus, when he talks about the universe and the sun and the moon, he is also talking about man and what he is composed of.

SINCE GURDJIEFF HAS CHOSEN to present his ideas in part in the form of allegory, one can read those parts of this book simply as fascinating science-fiction. The story opens aboard the space ship Karnak. Beelzebub is traveling to a conference where his sage advice is needed on matters of cosmic significance. He is accompanied by his grandson, Hasein, and his old and faithful servant Ahoon. As they travel, Beelzebub regales Hasein with tales about the Earth, about events in the universe, and about cosmological and psychological law. Beelzebub tells Hasein how he happened to become interested in the planet Earth. During his youth, he intervened in affairs that were of no concern to him and as punishment was banished to Mars, in a "remote corner of the Universe" (our solar system). There he builds a telescope in order to study the goings-on on Earth and to observe the strange customs of its inhabitants. He finds man's inclination to "destroy the existence of others" particularly strange and repugnant. The significance of Mars is perhaps in its distance—that is, one cannot become as easily prejudiced if one has perspective.

Beelzebub then relates an engrossing story about the early life of Earth, which is filled with psychological implications. Due to cosmological disturbances, two fragments broke off from the Earth early in its creation—one was the moon, the other what Gurdjieff calls Anulios which Earthmen do not know exists. In order to maintain the balance of the universe, it was necessary to ensure that these two satellites remain orbiting around the Earth, and Earthmen were required to give off a certain substance that would facilitate that end. Fearing that if the Earthmen found out what their function was, they might find no reason for continuing to live, the higher powers implanted an organ in them called Kundabuffer which prevented them from perceiving their true condition. Later the organ was removed, but unfortunately its consequences remained and they remain to this day. The Kundabuffer was only intended to prevent man from seeing reality, but it also caused the additional qualities of self-love, vanity, swagger, pride, etc. These qualities are psychological and emotional props which put a cloud over the true nature of man. Hence, man needs a vantage point beyond the cloud, as if from Mars, to see this real nature and to discover there the purpose of his life. Gurdjieff presents this purpose not only as an aim, but as a duty—a duty quite separate from the usual ethical and moral obligations.

Beelzebub also tells of his personal visits to Earth where he learns more about the nature of man after gaining preliminary knowledge through his telescope. These trips may be construed as a more advanced step in the method of working on oneself—perhaps implying that once having acquired the ability to see oneself objectively as if from the outside, one can then make closer observations and still retain one's state of impartiality. These descents to Earth are narrated to his grandson for educational purposes, but they are always entertaining stories. In all, Beelzebub makes six trips to Earth, each possibly representing a specific portion of the body or psyche deserving study.

Beelzebub is not alone in his quest after development, and he tells his grandson of other people—some extra-terrestrials, some Earthmen and some of divine origin—also in pursuit of objective truth. The first of them is Gornahoor Harharkh, whom we first meet in the chapter "The Arch-preposterous." He is an "essence-friend" of Beelzebub's living on Saturn. His prime interest is

in electricity called Okidanokh which participates in the formation of all new arisings. Gornahoor Harharkh invents a machine which demonstrates and makes available for his use the properties of Okidanokh. The purpose of his experiments is to develop his Reason—an attribute which, according to Gurdjieff, man does not have by nature but must acquire through effort. The machine is described in great detail, and the experiment might correspond to an exercise or practice connected with "the Work."

Perhaps the most outstanding character in the book (outside of Beelzebub) is Ashiata Shiemash. We learn about him in a series of four chapters which are some of the most emotionally stimulating in the book. Ashiata Shiemash was sent to Earth as a messenger from above, a messiah figure of enormous nobility and beauty. His writings are unusually moving and have a scriptural tone and quality. An example are his three verses on what he calls the sacred being-impulses of Faith, Love and Hope:

Faith of consciousness is freedom
Faith of feeling is weakness
Faith of body is stupidity.

Love of consciousness evokes the same in response
Love of feeling evokes the opposite
Love of body depends only on type and polarity.

Hope of consciousness is strength
Hope of feeling is slavery
Hope of body is disease.



Ashiata Shiemash establishes the Being-Obligolnian Strivings, five rules of objective morality which lead to genuine conscience. These five rules are:

1. to have everything satisfying and really necessary for one's body,
2. to have a constant and unflagging instinctive need for self-perfection in the sense of being,
3. the conscious striving to know ever more and more concerning the laws of World-creation and World-maintenance,
4. to strive from the beginning of one's existence to pay for one's arising and individuality as quickly as possible, in order afterwards to be free to lighten as much as possible the Sorrow of our Common Father,
5. the striving always to assist the most rapid perfecting of other beings, both those similar to oneself and those of other forms, up to the degree of self-individuality.

Gurdjieff points out that one of the psychological traits of contemporary man which impedes the formation of a conscience is the "disease of tomorrow"—i.e., putting off until later or tomorrow what should be done now.



WOVEN INTO BEELZEBUB'S STORIES are pieces of information that seem quite straightforward. For instance, Beelzebub explains to his grandson that man is composed of three brains or centers. They are the instinctive or moving center, the emotional or feeling center, and the intellectual or thinking center. Perhaps Beelzebub and his party can be seen as a demonstration of the three centers functioning together as a unit, each having a definite role to fulfill. Beelzebub himself would correspond to the thinking center. He has all the information, is the maker of plans and decisions, and is the leader of the group. Ahoon, the servant, represents the physical center. He is described as faithful. He is always there, ready to serve and does not intrude with his own personal desires—perhaps a more ideal condition for the body to be in than is generally the case with man. Hassein represents the emotional center. He is young, not fully developed, is in the process of being educated, has willingness and eagerness to grow up, and is often intensely moved by what Beelzebub tells him. In this analogy it can be seen how Gurdjieff's method, which has been called the Fourth Way, differs from the three ways of the monk, the yogi and the fakir. They each try to develop primarily through the means of one center: the fakir through chastisement of the body, the yogi through mental discipline, and the monk through prayer and belief, which are chiefly emotional. For Gurdjieff's work, all three centers must be utilized so that man can develop harmoniously, not lopsidedly.

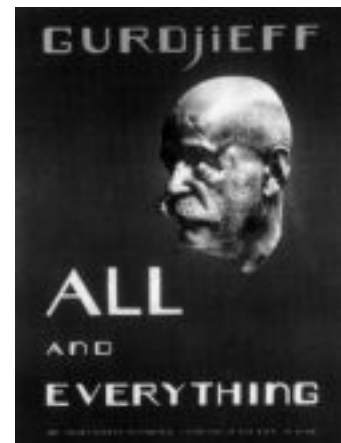
The knowledge of this concept of three centers is prerequisite to Gurdjieff's treatment of the Law of Three. It is quite an unusual concept and rarely, if ever, appears in contemporary scientific knowledge. Yet Gurdjieff maintains that it is the underlying principle in all phenomena and also plays a very significant role in man's possible development. The Law of Three states that there are three rather than two forces always in operation. We generally, of course, know of only positive and negative. To this, Gurdjieff adds the neutralizing force.

Beelzebub tells how each of man's three centers can play a part in his development through the use of consciously ingested and digested substances. Unfortunately, man in his present condition does not take in these substances and therefore does not fulfill his potentialities. The chapter "Hypnotism" goes into it, telling what these substances are, how they are to be ingested and digested, and what the results of this can be.

Towards the end of the book, in the chapter "Form and Sequence," Gurdjieff draws a distinction between knowing and understanding. Understanding can only result through the conscious verification of knowledge. So, although the book presents knowledge, and perhaps knowledge of a very high order, it is not in itself useful unless one puts it to the test—digests it and converts it into understanding.



INTERSPERSED WITH HIS STORIES, Beelzebub discusses various theoretical and philosophical subjects. At one point in their travels through space, Beelzebub's party learns of the impending appearance of a comet which could, if they cross its path, poison the ship's passengers. Beelzebub decides that the Karnak should wait in outer space until the comet has gone by. He makes use of this time to explain to Hassein the dynamics of space ships, much as the contemporary father explains the workings of an automobile to his young son, and also in keeping with the best tradition in science-fiction. But here, in allegory perhaps, are principles dealing with the methodology of "work on oneself." Included in his explanations is the idea of perpetual motion which Beelzebub puts forth in such a plausible way that one is hard put to find any theoretical flaw in it. Perhaps there are indications here of what kind of fuel could be used to keep oneself in perpetual effort to develop.



Another exciting principle which Gurdjieff brings forth is the Law of Seven, to which he devotes a whole chapter. If one can in any way sum up the intricate logic of this law, it is that all events proceed in seven steps or "deflections," each step having specific attributes and properties which determine the progress of every activity. Gurdjieff links this law and its progressions rather intimately with the stages of a man's development.

The Law of Seven has at least several illustrations in contemporary knowledge—obviously in the music octave, but more profoundly in the periodic table of elements in chemistry. When the elements are lined up in tabular form, each series headed by an inert element, it can be seen that certain of their characteristics repeat in patterns of seven. It is interesting to note here that the electrons of inert elements have closed orbits; they cannot combine with the other elements of this world easily. Thus, we see that Gurdjieff's theories are not solely a product of his rich imagination, and it is fascinating to see how he finds psychological applications in them.

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IN MANY WAYS, Gurdjieff seems to be trying to discourage people from reading *All and Everything*. In the introduction, which he calls "Arousing of Thought," not only thought, but many feelings are aroused—some unpleasant ones toward Gurdjieff himself. Gurdjieff helps to invoke these by such statements as, "cheerful and swaggering candidate for a buyer of my writing...before embarking in the reading...reflect seriously and then undertake it...you might lose your...appetite for you favorite dish and for your...neighbor, the brunette." Apparently Gurdjieff does this to keep the reader from being lulled or feeling complacent. He wants to agitate and unsettle us—shake us loose from our ordinary way of thinking and of receiving new impressions.

One of the aspects of the book that is quite decidedly "arousing" is the very manner in which it is presented. Sometimes there is digression upon digression, so that Gurdjieff appears rambling and disconnected. But actually each seeming digression adds a new dimension to that which is being

discussed. Another problem is that people are so used to what Gurdjieff calls "bon ton literary language"—exciting images and lulling reveries requiring little effort on the reader's part. Gurdjieff writes quite otherwise on purpose; he constructs sentences which are, at times, outlandishly long and complex—sometimes a quarter of a page in length.

Gurdjieff seems hell bent on disturbing our equilibrium, for there is hardly a "quiet" moment in the book that is not disturbed by one of Gurdjieff's classic "Otherwises." This, as he explains in the introduction, is based on an injunction from his grandmother which states, "In life never do as others do...Either do nothing—just go to school—or do something nobody else does."

It is sometimes hard to determine when Gurdjieff is being humorous and when serious. He will often discuss a most weighty problem in a tone which is light, sometimes facetious, often with tongue-in-cheek. A prime example of this is his discussion of our responsibilities towards, as he puts it, "Mister God." In reverse, in the chapter "America," Gurdjieff discusses many topics with mock seriousness—the American "dollar-business," drinking and prohibition, the Chatterlitz school of languages, a strange fellow from Chicago called Mr. Bellybutton and on and on. This chapter is really spiced with pungent wit!

One of the best elements of Gurdjieff's humor is his timing. He doesn't allow the reader to get heavy and ponderous, because he sprinkles his humor strategically throughout. Often when considering a most serious question, he interrupts with a quote from the legendary Arab philosopher, Mullah Nassr Eddin.

Also contributing to the fact that the course of the reading is not, to quote Mullah Nassr Eddin, "Roses, roses," is the liberal usage of the Karatasian language—the strange words that belong to Beelzebub's vocabulary. These words are often an unusual assemblage of syllables with three or four consecutive vowels. Some of the roots are traceable such as Triamazikamno (tri=three) coming from 'tri' for three and Egoplastikoori and Legominism (ego=I), coming from 'ego' for I; but always connected with them are syllables not so easily traceable. It is not that Gurdjieff leaves the reader hanging, for he often goes to great length to define and illustrate these words. But an examination of their construction can no doubt shed even further light on them, and Gurdjieff offers quite an adventure in word exploration for those so inclined. There is the word zion in the names of two "searchers after truth"—King Konuzion and Makary Kronbernkzion. Then there are words which seem to come directly from various eastern languages, like the name of the space ship Karnak that Beelzebub and his company are traveling in, which means "dead body" in Armenian.

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DESPITE ALL THE inherent difficulties which Gurdjieff has implanted in this book, the rewards are there. But and in keeping with Gurdjieff's philosophy, the rewards are commensurate with the reader's struggle to find them. The book is certainly well worth the struggle.

In the last chapter, Beelzebub, in an exultant experience, is graduated to a state of higher Reason, which he has earned through his efforts to develop. The ritual connected with this has the solemnity of a religious ceremony and is deeply moving and inspiring. So, "An Objectively Impartial Criticism of the Life of Man" ends with a triumphal sense of hope, of salvation, of redemption. But not before Hassein is invited to ask one final question of his grandfather. Hassein asks what hope there is for the salvation of people on Earth, and most aptly the story ends with the reply:

The sole means now for the saving of the beings of the planet Earth would be to implant again into their presences a new organ, an organ like Kundabuffer, but this time of such properties that every one of these unfortunates during the process of existence should constantly sense and be cognizant of the inevitability of his own death as well as of the death of everyone upon whom his eyes or attention rests.

Only such a sensation and such a cognizance can now destroy the egoism completely crystallized in them that has swallowed up the whole of their Essence and also that tendency to hate others which flows from it—the tendency, namely, which engenders all those mutual relationships existing there, which serve as the chief cause of all their abnormalities unbecoming to three-brained beings and maleficent for them themselves and for the whole of the Universe.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

All and Everything Meetings with Remarkable Men

Commentary by Terry Winter Owens

MANY HAVE SOUGHT TO KNOW the sources of G. I. Gurdjieff's teachings and to uncover the facts of his life. Both those who worked with him, and those whose contact with him was but momentary, alike shared a curiosity and mystification. So deep was the impression that Gurdjieff made upon others that many people of stature and discrimination have given statements proclaiming him to have been the most remarkable man they ever encountered. It is little wonder that they wished to know what factors had combined to produce such a colossus.

Gurdjieff's [MEETINGS WITH REMARKABLE MEN](#) contains the outlines of a very unusual autobiography, covering Gurdjieff's youth and the most mysterious period of his life spent in search of esoteric knowledge in the Near and Far East. But if Gurdjieff concedes this much to curiosity about himself, it is only a small concession. The author had an altogether different purpose than autobiography in mind. His aim is to tell us not about himself but about the men he has known who have proved themselves remarkable—by their courage and endurance, their intelligence and ingenuity, their steadfastness of purpose and perseverance in face of insuperable difficulties. In the end, it becomes clear his primary purpose is not to tell us about remarkable men as mere biography, but to use this biographical form to elucidate the answers to many profound and difficult questions and to validate the principles of his philosophy and teachings in concrete examples of unusual excellence. In this way Gurdjieff repays the curious one-hundred fold and, should the reader's curiosity be transformed into a real *desire* for knowledge, he will find himself rewarded far beyond his dearest expectation.

This, then, is the history of a rare adventure with treasures to be unearthed at every turn of the road. It is an adventure based on the extraordinary early life of G. I. Gurdjieff and on his search through remote and uncharted regions for those ancient truths which might serve to develop the consciousness of contemporary man. It receives its substance from the exciting and often deeply moving accounts of those who reared and trained him, and of those who shared his unusual journey. It is an adventure of the mind—growing, being formed, setting out after inner knowledge, discovering it and putting it to

the test of practice. Thus it is an adventure in two worlds, and it will be the reader's delight and enrichment to discern where one world ends and the other begins.

Those who have read Gurdjieff's first work, *ALL AND EVERYTHING: [Beelzebub's Tales To His Grandson](#)*, will recall that the author in that book aimed at the "merciless destruction of beliefs rooted for centuries in man." Here, in this second book, like a phoenix rising from the ashes, Gurdjieff turns from destruction to construction. He proves that it is possible for man to attain a certain stability and a higher level of consciousness in life based on objective values. *Gurdjieff's remarkable men did not cast off their everyday lives but used them as the very material for creating within themselves a new level of Being.* Their resourcefulness, ingenuity and perseverance in this unusual task uncover the means for man to actualize this full potential. Throughout the book he illuminates a world of possibilities for man which will be utterly new to most readers—possibilities tailored for the man determined to live, grow and develop in a complex and demanding world—not in a remote monastery or ivory tower.

Those who are acquainted with *ALL AND EVERYTHING* will immediately be aware of the stylistic contrast between that book and the new one. The first was very difficult to read, the second is eminently readable. The two books can be linked to a favorite saying of Gurdjieff's father: "Without salt, no sugar."

It is appropriate that Gurdjieff's father is the first of the remarkable men, from whom he received his earliest and most profound impressions. What good fortune to be the son of such a man! He was one of the last *ashohks* or bards who transmitted ancient stories and legends orally from generation to generation and he lived by principles not founded on conventional ethics or morals but on a wisdom issuing from his own highly developed state of being. His insistence on obeying his own commandments, even in a world which was in many ways counter to such a mode of life, inevitably produced hardships which he met with singular courage. Of him, Gurdjieff remembers:

...all the grandeur of my father's calm and the detachment of his inner state in all his external manifestations, throughout the misfortunes which befell him.

I can now say for certain that in spite of his desperate struggle with the misfortunes which poured upon him as through from the horn of plenty, he continued, then as before, in all the difficult circumstances of his life, to retain the soul of a true poet.

And he instilled in Gurdjieff a deep love of high ideals such as:

To be outwardly courteous to all without distinction, whether they be rich or poor, friends or enemies, power-possessors or slaves, and to whatever religion they may belong, but inwardly to remain free and never put much trust in anyone or anything.

To love work for work's sake and not for its gain.

The next masterful man, Dean Borsh, was Gurdjieff's tutor; a man "distinguished by the breadth and depth of his knowledge." His philosophy of education was a most unusual one—and Gurdjieff credits him with being

...the founder and creator of my present individuality, and so to say, the 'third aspect of my inner God'.

The other remarkable men were related to Gurdjieff by a profound thirst for truth. Despite the diversity of their backgrounds and nationalities, a bond was formed among these men as though they were magnetically attracted by the one paramount aim. They accompanied Gurdjieff on one or more of the rewarding odysseys made to the Near and Far East.

There was Bogachevsky who (Gurdjieff says) is still alive and in a monastery of the Essene Brotherhood near the Dead Sea. Gurdjieff deems him to be

...one of the first persons on earth who has been able to live as our Divine Teacher Jesus Christ wished for us all.

There was Captain Pogossian who, upon completion of theological studies, embarked on a career in the engine room of a ship and went on to amass a huge fortune as a shipping magnate. Pogossian had a unique characteristic; one which makes his seemingly fantastic accomplishments quite believable.

Pogossian was always occupied; he was always working at something.

He never sat, as is said, with folded arms, and one never saw him lying down, like his comrades reading diverting books which give nothing real. If he had no definite work to do, he would either swing his arms in rhythm, mark time with his feet or make all kinds of manipulations with his fingers.

I once asked him why he was such a fool as not to rest, since no one would pay him anything for these useless exercises.

'Yes, indeed', he replied, 'for the present no one will pay me for these foolish antics of mine—as you and all those pickled in the same barrel of brine think they are—but in the future either you yourself or your children will pay me for them. Joking apart, I do this because I like work, but I like it not with my nature, which is just as lazy as that of other people and never wishes to do anything useful. I like work with my common sense.

'Please bear in mind', he added, 'that when I use the word "I", you must understand it not as the whole of me, but only as my mind. I love work and have set myself the task

of being able, through persistence, to accustom my whole nature to love it and not my reason alone.

'Further, I am really convinced that in the world no conscious work is ever wasted. Sooner or later someone must pay for it. Consequently, if I now work in this way, I achieve two of my aims. First, I shall perhaps teach my nature not to be lazy, and secondly, I will provide for my old age. As you know, I cannot expect that when my parents die they will leave me an ample inheritance to suffice for the time when I will no longer have the strength to earn a living. I also work because the only real satisfaction in life is to work not from compulsion but consciously; that is what distinguishes man from a Karabakh ass, which also works day and night.'

Then there is Yelov, an Aisor bookseller who felt the same way about mental activity as Pogossian felt about physical activity. He became a phenomenon in the knowledge of languages. Gurdjieff, who then spoke eighteen languages, felt a greenhorn next to him. Another was Prince Yuri Lubovedsky, a man of incredible tenacity. After forty-five long years in a fruitless search for the meaning and aim of his life, he remained undiscouraged. In his persistence, he was finally taken to a monastery in which ancient truths were preserved in an unusual system of sacred dances.

Professor Skridlov comes next, animated by his love of archeology. He engaged in excavations in the ruins of ancient Egypt hoping to find the road to self-realization.

There are others whom Gurdjieff tells about in this series of unforgettable stories including Ekim Bey who had an avid interest in hypnotism and everything related to it. Tormented by inner conflict, he ultimately found guidance in the counsel of a venerated Persian Dervish to whom, almost at the eleventh hour, he was able to lay bare his deepest questions.

Gurdjieff's masterful ability as a storyteller produces a whole spectrum of colors; from profound seriousness to brilliant humor. One of the most outstanding shades on his palette is that of sheer excitement. In one episode Gurdjieff and Soloviev are taken to a hidden monastery, having given their solemn oath never to reveal its location.

Throughout the whole of our journey, we strictly and conscientiously kept our oath not to look and not to try to find out where we were going and through what places we were passing. When we halted for the night, and occasionally by day when we ate in some secluded place, our *bashliks* were removed. But while on the way we were only twice permitted to uncover our eyes. The first time was on the eighth day, when we were about to cross a swinging bridge which one could neither cross on horseback nor walk over two abreast, but only in single file, and this it was impossible to do with eyes covered.

From the character of the surroundings then revealed to us we deduced that we were

either in the valley of the Pyandzh River or of the Zeravshan, as there was a broad stream flowing beneath us, and the bridge itself with the mountains surrounding it was very similar to the bridges in the gorges of these two rivers.

It must be said that, had it been possible to cross this bridge blindfold, it would have been much better for us. Whether it was because we had gone for a long time before that with our eyes covered or for some other reason, I shall never forget the nervousness and terror we experienced in crossing this bridge. For a long time we could not bring ourselves even to set foot on it.

Such bridges are very often met with in Turkestan, wherever there is no other possible route, or in places where to advance one mile would otherwise require a twenty-day detour.

The sensation one has when one stands on one of these bridges and looks down to the bottom of the gorge, where there is usually a river flowing, can be compared to that of looking down from the top of the Eiffel Tower, only many times more intense; and when one looks up, the tops of the mountains are out of sight—they can only be seen from a distance of several miles.

Moreover, these bridges hardly ever have a handrail, and they are so narrow that only one mountain packhorse can cross at a time; further-more, they rock up and down as if one were walking on a good spring mattress—and I will not even speak about the feeling of uncertainty as to their strength.

For the most part they are held in place by ropes, made from the fiber of the bark of a certain tree, one end attached to the bridge and the other fastened to some near-by tree on the mountainside or to a projection of rock. In any case, these brides are not to be recommended even to those who in Europe are called thrill-chasers. The heart of any European crossing these bridges would sink, not into his boots, but somewhere still lower.

As these stories unfold, Gurdjieff undertakes the task of answering the nine questions which were most often put to him in the course of his teaching:

- What remarkable men have I met?
- What marvels have I seen in the East?
- Has man a soul and is it immortal?
- Is the will of man free?
- What is life, and why does suffering exist?
- Do I believe in the occult and spiritualistic sciences?
- What are hypnotism, magnetism and telepathy?

- How did I become interested in these questions?
- What led me to my system, practiced in the Institute bearing my name?

Gurdjieff also imparts to the reader seven sayings handed down from antiquity, each of which formulates one aspect of objective truth.

Every chapter is a rich mixture of adventure, philosophy and biography.

Much of it will remain probably the only information we shall ever have about Gurdjieff's life and the sources of his knowledge.

But whatever else this book may be, at its foundation is the expression of an extraordinary system of esoteric ideas dealing with the spiritual growth of man. The principle goal of this system is the development of man's latent possibilities. Gurdjieff's men either exemplify one or another aspect of this development or uncover the means for actualizing such possibilities.

In Gurdjieff's father, for instance, one sees the realization in man of an "I"—a permanent, reliable and enduring entity—an attribute which is one of the ultimate aims of the system. Through Bogachevsky, who formulated a code for Objective Morality, is revealed principles to guide the man seeking to acquire higher states of consciousness. Vitvitskaia, who at one point stood on the brink of moral ruin but nevertheless developed into a woman "such as might serve as an ideal for every woman," is a beautiful illustration of the fact that this system does not call for "moral" or "circumstantial" improvement but rather for the creation of a spiritual existence independent of one's station in life. And Karpenko, who sought the ability to live "as designed from Above and as is worthy of man," exemplifies worthiness of a supra-normal nature.

Still without question, the most remarkable man is Gurdjieff himself. Not that Gurdjieff uses his writing for self-aggrandizement. On the contrary, he goes to great lengths to give credit where credit is due and invariably credits others with the responsibility for his own achievements. Nevertheless he appears as a paragon of resourcefulness, intelligence and imagination. In the epilogue, "The Material Question" where Gurdjieff tells how he financed the operation of his [Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man](#), we see Gurdjieff almost single-handedly running a most unique enterprise.

One of the most outstanding of Gurdjieff's remarkable characteristics was his unflagging willingness to hazard any and all conditions to bring his search of objective knowledge to fruition. Through his toils and sacrifices, Gurdjieff became a channel through which sacred knowledge from antiquity reached the twentieth century. In his role as a teacher, Gurdjieff used the knowledge which he codified from many sources to synthesize a system which provides the means for man's development of Being, a permanent "I", higher states of consciousness and all that these imply.

This book provides indubitable testimony that there is a summit of achievement towards which man can strive.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

The Struggle to “Fathom the Gist” of *Beelzebub’s Tales*

by Terry Winter Owens

For over 30 years, I have wanted to write a follow up to the [essay on Gurdjieff's *All and Everything*](#), that I wrote in the 1960's expressly for the University Books Mystic Arts Book Club. Writing now from a different perspective, I want to specially focus on Gurdjieff's "friendly advice" to the reader and some issues that arose from a consideration of that advice. In the preamble titled "[Friendly Advice](#)," that Gurdjieff inserts before the table of contents to *All and Everything*, he states:

I find it necessary on the first page of this book, quite ready for publication, to give the following advice: 'Read each of my written expositions thrice:

- Firstly—at least as you have already become mechanized to read all contemporary books and newspapers.
- Secondly—as if you were reading aloud to another person.
- And only thirdly—try and fathom the gist of my writings.'

Only then will you be able to count upon forming your own impartial judgment, proper to yourself alone, on my writings. And only then can my hope be actualized that according to your understanding you will obtain the specific benefit for yourself which I anticipate, and which I wish for you with all my being.

Who among students of the Work would not wish for this benefit for themselves? Probably I will not gain anything beneficial or significant from still another overview of [Beelzebub's Tales](#). But something quite beneficial may be gained from the process of fathoming. What Gurdjieff intended by the verb fathoming is a question worthy of deep consideration and one which inevitably leads to other questions....

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Gurdjieff's Philosophy of Nature

by [Basarab Nicolescu](#)

It is becoming very fashionable almost everywhere to find parallels between modern science and this or that teaching, this or that philosophical system, this or that religion. The more or less hidden sociological root of such a tendency is quite obvious: the contemporary all-powerful "god" of technoscience is evoked as evidence of the "seriousness" of another field of knowledge.

Even if the intentions of certain seekers (and I include here those few who are drawn toward the relationship between science and the Gurdjieff teaching) are not tied to this sociological motivation, there is still a huge misunderstanding. The methodology and perspective of a teaching, a system of philosophy, or a religion are very different from the methodology and aim of modern science. To compare results or ideas judged to be similar can only lead to the worst illusions, to analogies that are soft and devoid of meaning, and, in the best of cases, to resonances that are felt as "poetic."

Nevertheless, the search for a real relationship between science and such fields of study would, in our opinion, be worthwhile. Such a relationship could be established if the teaching, the philosophical system, or the religion in question derives from a philosophy of nature.¹

The fact that Gurdjieff's teaching contains a philosophy of nature is obvious, and the present study will attempt to support that affirmation. The hypothesis of a correspondence between man and nature is formulated without ambiguity by Gurdjieff:

It is impossible to study a system of the universe without studying man. At the same time, it is impossible to study man without studying the universe. Man is an image of the world. He was created by the same laws which created the whole of the world. By knowing and understanding himself, he will know and understand the whole world, all the laws that create and govern the world. And at the same time, by studying the world and the laws that govern the world, he will learn and understand the laws which govern him.... The study of the world and the study of man must therefore run parallel, the one helping the other.²

The comparison between modern science and this type of philosophy goes beyond an intellectual exercise. In the first place, some great scientific discoveries have been guided by ideas from a

philosophy of nature. For example, the role that German *Naturphilosophie* played in the discovery of electromagnetism in 1820 by Oersted is well known. Such cases are rare, but it is their existence, not their number, that is highly significant. These cases show that there is an intrinsic relationship, which is not devoid of meaning, between nature and a "realistic" philosophy of nature.

A second aspect seems still more important. The absence of meaning, above all the absence of a value system guiding technoscience, is perhaps the characteristic trait of our epoch. It is just in this context that we are going to examine Gurdjieff's philosophy of nature....

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

No Harem

Gurdjieff and the Women of The Rope

by Rob Baker

*"No harem, no hysteria, no ogling,
just a very wise old man
in his rich pantry of food and thoughts."*

Janet Flanner on visiting G. I. Gurdjieff in Paris after WW II.

During most of the Thirties and Forties in Paris, an extraordinary group of strong-willed women, mostly writers who also happened to be lesbians, became students of the spiritual teacher, G. I. Gurdjieff, meeting privately with him as a small band that called themselves "The Rope." Their ties with Gurdjieff radically changed their lives, their writing styles, and their relationships to each other.

Several of the Rope members were also close acquaintances of Gertrude Stein, who by no means shared their enthusiasm for their spiritual teacher. But Gurdjieff was, in his way, as unconventional a spiritual teacher as Stein was a writer. He often employed shock techniques that today would be seen to resemble those associated with Zen or Sufi masters. Kathryn Hulme, who later went on to write the best-seller *The Nun's Story*, recounts one such experience in an unpublished letter to Jane Heap, a fellow writer who had been the person who first introduced her to Gurdjieff's ideas:

We got off at Cafe Select and walked down Montparnasse. He said to me, You funny person, I not understand you. And we walked on. At a corner near the Gare he turned abruptly, said, No, that place too strong for you, we go other place. And so we walked beyond the Gare and came to a house which I spotted instantly as one of the so-called hot spots of Montparnasse. He said, looking up at the shuttered windows—Nice house, new house—and in we went. It was packed with men, and naked girls dancing together with only a twist of silk around the loins. He was watching me in his way, but I truly was not shocked or astonished; I've seen things in my time and felt nothing inside which would have told itself to him. We took a small table and had two

Perrier's. It was strange being in a place like that with him. I can't tell you what all my thoughts and emotions were, they went so fast. Naked girls brushing buttocks past our table, and men reaching out to them—that sort of thing. He watched everything. I never felt so safe or so secure in all my life—and yet, all the while, he was baiting me. He said, What is your taste? He wanted me to pick the girl I would choose if I were man, he said. I simply could not, I said; They all look alike to me, smell alike. Choose, he said, which one.

Hulme tried to pass the test by standing the two Perrier bottles side by side and insisting that she could no more choose between the two bottles than choose one of the women above the others. Gurdjieff nodded slyly, but then pointed out that one bottle was fuller than the other, and that, similarly, there were hostesses in the room whose asking price was higher than the regular "girls." Hulme began to see that her seemingly simple reactions to the situation and her real inner attitudes about it might be far more complex than she had suspected. In the letter to Heap, she continues:

Then, after a long time of staring around, he turned suddenly and said—Suppose, example, you out there, no clothes, I here; I choose you, why? Because I see (and he put his hands over his eyes and gestured inwards) something else, he said.

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What was this "something else" that Gurdjieff saw in these women writers of *The Rope*, keeping them separate from his other students and groups, regaling them at elaborate dinner parties at Parisian restaurants or cooked in his own apartment, and giving them intensive instruction in his method, often for days or weeks at a time? And what did they, in turn, see in him and his demanding "work"? The story of this relationship, far from being an account of a group of awestruck disciples and their unapproachable guru, is a lively tale of various struggles between mind and spirit, between body (including sexuality) and soul, between ideas and feelings, between conformity and non-conformity, the old and the new, tradition and modernity—all put into perspective by the shifting methods and techniques of a teacher like few others: the rascal, the rogue, the "sly man" who was Gurdjieff.

Over most of two decades, *The Rope* at various times consisted of the following cast of characters:

Kathryn Hulme, author of *The Nun's Story* (made into a film starring Audrey Hepburn), *The Wild Place* (winner of the Atlantic Non-Fiction Prize Award in 1953 and an account of her work in a Displaced Persons camp after World War II), and [*Undiscovered Country*](#) (a description of her years with Gurdjieff). A woman of boundless energy (she worked as a welder in a ship-building factory during World War II), she was also an astute and perceptive observer of life around her (and especially of *The Rope*). Gurdjieff made it his task to strip her of her sentimentality and tendency toward purple prose; it was an endless process, which both seemed to enjoy immensely. After several years working with Displaced Persons after World



War II, she and her companion, a former nun named Marie-Louise Habets (the subject of *The Nun's Story*) moved to the United States, living in Connecticut, southern California, and finally on the Hawaiian island of Kauai, where Hulme died in 1981. [Photo—from the jacket of the original Atlantic-Little Brown edition, by Senda of Kauai]

Alice Rohrer, a San Francisco milliner, who had been Hulme's companion at the time she met Gurdjieff and who especially attracted the teacher's attention by being, importantly, the least intellectual (and most emotion-centered and spontaneous) member of The Rope. She also had money—all acquired through her own talent and ability: she had been born on a farm in Pennsylvania Dutch country but always convinced her customers she was French and from the upper classes.

Jane Heap and **Margaret Anderson**, founding editors of the legendary *Little Review*, the literary journal which first published the poetry of Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot in the United States, as well as the first chapters of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (the printing of which led to the editors' arrest and trial for alleged obscenity). The two had first met Gurdjieff in New York in 1924 and shortly relocated themselves and their magazine to Paris, partly to study with him at his institute at Fontainebleau, which he maintained until he was seriously injured in an automobile accident in 1929.



Heap became a lifelong student and teacher in the Gurdjieff work, introducing most of the other Rope members to the ideas, then moved to London, where she led Gurdjieff study groups until her death in 1964. Anderson stayed in France and continued working with Gurdjieff until his death, bringing two of her companions (Georgette Leblanc and Dorothy Caruso) and even Leblanc's salt-of-the-earth housekeeper, Monique Serrure, into The Rope as well. She published three volumes of her own autobiography (*My Thirty Years War*, *The Fiery Fountains*, and *The Strange Necessity*), as well as her own account of the Rope years, *The Unknowable Gurdjieff*. [Heap photo—Copyright © Berenice Abbott] [Anderson photo—Copyright © 1996 Naiad Press, Inc.—taken from *Forbidden Fires* by Margaret C. Anderson edited and with an Introduction by Mathilda M. Hills]

Georgette Leblanc, an esteemed soprano, once Maurice Maeterlinck's mistress and a close friend of Jean Cocteau. She was also an accomplished writer, publishing two volumes of autobiography and several children's books and travel accounts. Her prose and poetry both sing with a unique lyricism that teeters precariously between real feeling and sentimentality. The first volume of her autobiography was translated into English by Janet Flanner (one of the era's most astute observers, writing the "Letter from Paris" as Genêt in *The New Yorker*); the second, *La Machine à Courage*, deals with her impressions of Gurdjieff and (quite powerfully) her long battle with cancer, to which she succumbed in 1941, being the first of the Rope to die. [Photo—courtesy of Elizabeth Evans, By The Way Books]



Dorothy Caruso, widow of Enrico Caruso, became Anderson's companion after Leblanc's death and describes her latter-day acquaintance with Gurdjieff in her autobiography, *A Personal History*. After Gurdjieff's death Anderson and Caruso moved back to United States, where Caruso died of cancer in 1955. Anderson then returned to southern France, where Monique Serrure lived with her until she died at the age of 90 in 1968. Anderson herself died there in the village of Le Cannet in 1973.

Solita Solano, writer, editor, and longtime companion of Janet Flanner (who, like Gertrude Stein, was a peripheral observer and occasional visitor to Rope sessions: both strongly resisted and rather resented Gurdjieff and his influence over the members of the Rope). Solano was for a while Gurdjieff's secretary and other than Heap was the member of the group most familiar with the intricacies of his teaching. Both Anderson and Hulme relied heavily on her advice (and superb editorial skills) in their own books about Gurdjieff. (She edited all of Hulme's books for publication.) Her personal notes of The Rope's sessions with Gurdjieff are a treasure trove of information about his method and his own personality. Through her correspondence with the other members, she became the central focus of The Rope after Gurdjieff's death in 1949 until her own death, in Orgeval, France, in 1976. [Photo—from Library of Congress]



Louise Davidson, an actress and theatrical manager who, like Rohrer and Monique, related to the Gurdjieff work more through experience and feelings than words and writing. She never returned to France after moving back to the United States at the outbreak of World War II and spent her remaining years working with the theater company led by actress Eva le Galliene in Connecticut. [Photo—Copyright © 1996 Naiad Press, Inc.—taken from *Forbidden Fires* by Margaret C. Anderson edited and with an Introduction by Mathilda M. Hills]



Elisabeth Gordon, a prim British spinster whom Gurdjieff, for whatever reason, chose to instruct along with the other very different personality types in the Rope; she unquestioningly accepted his decision, as did the other members. She remained with Gurdjieff in Paris when all the other Rope members were forced back to the United States during World War II; she spent a period in an internment camp as a "foreign national" near the end of the war and died in Paris shortly after being released.

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Although Anderson, Leblanc, and Hulme all wrote books based on their experience with Gurdjieff, no objective account of the rich relationships that grew over the years between these women and their teacher (and among the members themselves) has previously been undertaken. Unlike Heap, the others did not maintain much direct contact with the rest of Gurdjieff's followers after his death in

1949, though his ideas remained a paramount influence in all their lives and in both the content and the style of their writings.

Some of Gurdjieff's other more conservative followers never quite knew how to relate to these independent and outspoken women, clearly in part because of their openness about their sexual preference. But the members of The Rope also maintained their distance as well: most of them simply went on with their lives after Gurdjieff's death.

The members kept in touch by letter and occasional visits, almost always referring to each other by the affectionate, "inner animal" names that Gurdjieff had given them: Hulme was Krokodeel (as Gurdjieff pronounced it) or Crocodile; Solano, Kanari or Canary; Alice, "Theen One" or Boa Constrictor; Anderson, Yakina (a Tibetan yak). Even occasional members of The Rope were given such sobriquets, as when Noel Murphy, a post-Solano companion of Janet Flanner, was dubbed Camel. The extensive correspondence between all these women (including letters to and from some who never really were a part of the group, like Flanner, or Solano's companion in later years, Lib Clark) makes clear that the ties that bound them all together and to the teaching were never severed. (Hulme did reestablish contact with some of the leading exponents of the Gurdjieff teaching after her book was published and traveled occasionally from Hawaii to San Francisco or Los Angeles to meet with groups there.)

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The work-in-progress would bridge the gap that has always existed between literary chroniclers of the Stein circle and historians of the Gurdjieff movement, each of whom, for their own reasons, have preferred to downplay whatever it was that connected Gurdjieff and The Rope, ignoring the tug-of-war that went on between the literary and the spiritual avant-garde. Each side has tended to dismiss the other as somehow diminishing or compromising the quality admired in either the writing or the Gurdjieff teaching.

A few samples from Solano's notes point out the ferment of this material, a content rich in both unconventional ideas and dramatic situations that were in themselves a unique teaching device:

Oct. 23, 1935: He said he is planning a group here and that we three are to start it. He said, "You very dirty but have something very good—many people not got—very special." When I began to cry, he said, "Must not cry." I said, "But I MUST." He said, "Must—but must not." . . . When I said, "I'm too old to begin this work—it's too late," he replied, "Never too late, but now it is twice as hard."

Oct. 28, 1935: At dinner I had the misfortune—no good fortune—to ask a "mental" question. Thunderbolts fell. "Now you know your illness, your sickness. It is curiosity—American curiosity. Always you want to know more and more without understanding what already I have said to you. For that you will die MERDE." Tears from me, of course. He asked, "You

angry?" I said, "No, it's true." When he left, he said, "Tonight you were bitten by your flea. You be careful not to catch more fleas or you cannot sleep in your bed."

Two of the techniques Gurdjieff used with the group were designating them according to "inner animal" metaphors (to help them better see their chief faults and potentials) and, similarly, his "toasts to the idiots" (a ritual based on his "science of idiotism" which had twenty-one different categories and levels and which he once described as a mirror in which human beings could see themselves):

May, 1936: Margaret has chosen zigzag for her idiot. **G.** "You cannot be zigzag." **M.** "But that is my condition now." **G.** "Condition? Your condition has nothing to do with inner world. You defile zigzag. Wish go too high. Zigzag is high idiot, goes this way, that way, struggles against merde he knows he is. Is as if you, a deacon, put on archbishop's robes."

"Idiots best book I wrote."

(To Miss G.) "You superior idiot, have been for years, never change. You are monster."

June 6, 1936: Margaret's animal was named during the afternoon at the cafe. A Tibetan yak, cousin of European cow. **G:** "But in your case, you not look on door of newpainted barn like cow which concerns itself only with question, 'Is that my home, or is it not?' You think like business man about quality of paint, how much cost, if will last, how react in rain—forget self completely." **M.** "But Mr. G., cows are placid, I don't wish to be a cow." **G:** "Cows not always placid; sometimes yak, this Tibetan cow, go berserk. People run inside house, shut door. Something take the psyche of this cow and entire being is wild—try break through wall—could even kill her children."

All the techniques focused on what Gurdjieff sometimes referred to as putting his followers "in galoshes." (Imagine a big, black, smelly rubber boot—big enough so you can't see your way out, you are over your head. It's dark, unpleasant, unfamiliar, confusing, frightening, disorienting. Everything you were comfortable with is taken away. You don't feel at all happy in your own skin.) In discussing the purpose of this once, he told Hulme: "I wish you be not like merde. So first I make you feel like merde. Only from there can one begin." And again, according to Solano's notes: "After roses, roses come thorns. Only then with thorns can man have possibility for happiness. After thorns comes the branching of the river, the two rivers. If not get on river which continues, you go on other, which goes down, down—and into the watercloset, moreover public watercloset." Such pricks to the analytical, mundane ego could occur at any time, even in the middle of a hearty meal:

July 24, 1936: There is a special baked eggplant dish. Yakina wonders aloud what it is and Sardine emphatically pronounces it "Aubergine" (eggplant). **G:** "Who tell aubergine? Sardine, you speak of only one thing. You not see in this the one thousand fly wings I put. Wing of fly is most important part, all rest of fly I throw away. Practically I will tell you what wings mean—with wings can go many places and I, night time, in dream with wings can fly. Yet you not see. First necessary see all, then speak aloud. AND aubergine."

By May 30, 1937, the members of the Rope were familiar enough with being put in galoshes themselves that Solano could report, seemingly without cracking a smile, the following incident involving the architect Frank Lloyd Wright, whose wife Olgivanna had studied with Gurdjieff before her marriage:

Dinner. Olgivanna and Frank Lloyd Wright, their child, Miss G. and K. **Wright:** "Very interesting, these idiots of yours. I've invented some also." (G. Did not reply.) "Mr. G., you're certainly a good cook. You could earn a lot of money cooking somewhere." **G:** "Not so much as I can earn shearing. (his way of referring to getting money from people interested in his work)." (After dinner Gurdjieff brought out a chapter of one of his writings and asked who would read.) **Wright:** "I read very well." (G. Left the room.) "Damn, I'm sleepy. I can't take it. Still, I don't want to hurt the old man's feelings." (Began to read and G. returned and sat down. Wright stopped reading.) "You know, Mr. G., this is interesting and it's a pity it's not well written. You know you talk English very well, too bad you can't dictate. Now if I had time you could dictate to me and I could write this for you in good English." (Read a few pages, stopped again.) "Now I must go and take my little daughter home. She's sleepy and so is her father." **G:** "Yes, for her sake, stop. She is young. You, of course, are old man now and life finish. But she only begin." **Wright (turning red):** "My life is NOT finished. I could right now make six more like her...." (Olgivanna with tears in her eyes led the child to the door.)

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In addition to the fiery interplay that took place between Gurdjieff and The Rope, there was a second level of exchange that took place between the women and their writing—specifically between the individual writers and their attempt to capture in words the teaching and the experience they were undergoing. As Hulme describes it (beginning, as usual, with hyperbole):

You can't sit gazing at a spiritual Himalaya for days on end and remain unchanged. Many of our meaningless mannerisms vanished, and there were inner changes as well. One of mine was attested by my thickening notebook. My memory, which had always been good, developed the accuracy of a tape-recorder in Gurdjieff's company. For the first time in my life I was listening to words rooted in reality. I could take an entire evening of his talk and reproduce it afterwards on my typewriter, word for word.

But when she tried to put turn those notebooks into a book thirty years later, Hulme found herself in galoshes again. She eventually wrote to Solano for help, but her old colleague initially protested, "What weight for a crocodile to put on the back of a small bird! The responsibility to say Stop or Go!! Katie, I may not be able to judge." But after receiving the first section of manuscript a few weeks later, Kanari was almost brutally frank with Krokodeel, calling the first draft a "hodge-podge, neither a proper autobiography nor an exposition of G[urdjief]f, a burlesque of his teachings, or at best, a bad satire. It is, for pages, just plain COMIC, my dear K."

Having learned to brace her crocodile hide against such stinging pecks from her canary editor, however, Hulme fired back: "I expected almost all of what you wrote." If anything, she said, the negativity helped her find some objectivity that had been painfully lacking in her initial effort: "For the first time in two years, I have clean air around me."

Hulme's longtime agent, Bernice Baumgarten Cozzens (wife of novelist James Gould Cozzens) also intervened, pleading to Solano, "Don't wash your hands of it. She's going to need your help."

Solano relented and got to work with her famous blue pencil (actually a red pen in her case) and started transforming the heart of the book (the middle 90 pages most directly concerned with Gurdjieff) into more objective prose: "Po-o-or Krok! You took my tuile on the tête like a soldier," she wrote back.

Once committed, both writer and editor were locked in a friendly struggle until the final draft of the manuscript went to the publisher a year and half later. Cozzens insisted that Solano do the final trimming of the manuscript: "It would be a terrible error for anyone outside to cut," she advised Hulme. "Trust only Solita," an insider who was also "an artist of the knife."

Solano's editorial knife excised not so much whole sections as words and phrases: hyperbole, purple adjectives, overwrought metaphors, unnecessary similes, verbs that were "too fancy" when simple ones would do. She took only two adjectives (in brackets here) out of the following description, but the trim spelled salvation for the sentence: "the [stupefying] climax of Guernica, whose apocalyptic horrors only the [flaming] art of Picasso would communicate to the world." But nothing could rescue the convoluted simile about the fate of the Rope after Jane Heap left for London: "not like light-bearing Lucifers but like wingless orphans with inner lights too newly-kindled, too frail still to survive the windy draft." The sentence was axed completely.

Solano would occasionally pencil in comments such as "Oh, Katie, you are my despair!"—"Stop describing!"—"You find every word I hate, without fail"—"You cannot talk like that!"—"Damn it, this is not a guide book!" Once she let loose with "Katie behave!" in response to the following description of Gurdjieff: "He nodded thoughtfully while his glowing remembering imprinted itself on our minds like an illumined page from an old Persian poem."

Solano was also quite specific about how Gurdjieff's ideas should be presented. "The word 'sense' is out of bounds," she wrote in one margin note. And in another: "This would seem ridiculous, Katie, in this form. You can't have it!" When Hulme used the phrase "by lapsing into materiality," Solano quickly pointed out, "But, Katie, we had NOT left it!"

Anything too personal or sentimental (Hulme's eternal bugaboo: her crocodile tears) Solano also resisted. When Hulme went overboard describing her own grief at her mother's death, Solano pecked: "No, no, no. You spoil it. You cannot have domestic business like this. Your grief is obvious."

In the end, the resulting collaboration, *Undiscovered Country*, was a success, pleasing even critics as skeptical as Anderson: "All your effort, your WORK, your REAL LOVE for him, all your real emotions ... When emotions are authentic, neither the general public nor the clever critics can doubt that truth, or help being moved."

Another especially positive response came from [Jeanne de Salzmann](#), the longtime associate whom Gurdjieff left in charge of his groups worldwide on his death in 1949. "Reading your book, I had a very strong feeling of the presence of M. Gurdjieff, with all his strength, his kindness, his greatness," she wrote Hulme. "It is a picture which moves you deeply and which you cannot forget—of the relation between a teacher and his pupil—the way he opens her to a wider world through a relation which touches the whole of her being.... There is a kind of sincerity, of truth, which makes one feel belonging to the same source."

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[Rob Baker was a former co-editor of [Parabola Magazine](#). He wrote frequently on the arts for such publications as *DanceMagazine*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Soho Weekly News*, and *The New York Daily News*. He is the author of *The Art of AIDS: From Stigma to Conscience*.]

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)



Jane Heap

1887–1964

by Rob Baker

Even before she met Gurdjieff, who was to become her mentor and lifelong inspiration, [Jane Heap](#) was already a legendary thinker and raconteur in her own right. She was born in rural Kansas, where her father was the warden of a mental asylum. Her earliest memories are of reading books and observing her father's patients. She moved to Chicago in 1916 and was soon the co-editor of the legendary literary journal, *The Little Review*, with [Margaret Anderson](#), who became her partner in her private life as well. As Hugh Ford writes in his profile of Anderson in *Four Lives in Paris* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1987), Heap was Anderson's "prolocutor, producing the pungent phrase when needed, articulating what Margaret could not describe, or, whenever Margaret ran out of words, obeying her command to say 'it' with a thrilling clarity that demolished the opposition." While Anderson played the grand dame (and played it very well, wooing important and talented writers to the magazine, as well as some men and women with a lot of money to keep such an enterprise going), Jane was her complementary opposite, an unassuming and unpretentious natural authority who was (as Ford again puts it) "a spellbinding talker...expressing ideas effortlessly and creatively as she went along. Whatever Jane said could always be discussed. Her ideas provoked challenge and provided opportunities for argument, agreement, or resistance—ideal conditions for one of Margaret's mind and temperament."

They were also "ideal conditions" for the study and teaching of G. I. Gurdjieff's ideas, which once assimilated, became the driving force in Jane Heap's life. Heap and Anderson first heard about Gurdjieff through his American representative [A. R. Orage](#) (himself a well-known editor in the literary world in which they moved). After meeting Gurdjieff himself during his 1924 visit to New York, Heap started a Gurdjieff study group in her Greenwich Village apartment. Anderson departed for [Gurdjieff's Institute](#) near Paris, accompanied by her new companion, soprano Georgette Leblanc. Heap followed in 1925. She settled in Paris, still helping Anderson edit *The Little Review* until 1929, when they shut it down. The two continued to visit Gurdjieff periodically at Fontainebleau, drawn to both the man and his ideas. When Anderson wrote of Heap's "uncanny knowledge of the human composition, her unfailing clairvoyance about human motivation," she could just as well have been describing Gurdjieff, as could Ford when he cites the startling originality of Heap's thinking: "She almost never quoted anybody, and what she said she expressed in a personal way. She said nothing

she had not thought herself."

Heap had started a Paris Gurdjieff study group in 1927; it blossomed to its fullest in the early 1930's, with the addition of writer Kathryn Hulme and writer/editor Solita Solano. In the fall of 1935, Gurdjieff sent Heap on to London, to work with groups there; her former Paris students approached Gurdjieff shortly after her departure and he took them on as a very special private group who called themselves [The Rope](#).

Heap's London students included such important Work figures as Michael Currier-Briggs, who became her literary executor; clothing designer Elspeth Champcommunal, who was also her companion in later life; ballet teacher Nesta Brooking; [Annie Lou Staveley](#), who was later to found Two Rivers Farm, a Work center in Oregon in the United States; and stage and film director Peter Brook.

Though she had written regularly for *The Little Review*, mostly pithy, somewhat sardonic criticisms of literature and art, Heap never in her lifetime published an account of her memories of working with Gurdjieff or leading groups in the study of his ideas (both Hulme and Anderson did so, greatly assisted by the editorial skills—and sharp memory—of Solano). After Heap's death in 1964, former students put together a collection of her aphorisms (some her own, some her teacher's) and, in 1983, some notes reflecting her expression of some of the key Gurdjieff ideas. Both the aphorisms and notebooks were once available in limited editions—the former from Phene Press in England and the latter from [Two Rivers Press](#) in Oregon. Two Rivers has since issued *The Notes of Jane Heap*. Here are a few samples from the Phene Press edition:

- Never oppose someone with the same center, always offer another one.
- Do not sit too long in the same place.
- You are responsible for what you have understood.
- Little steps for little feet.
- Suppress natural reaction and pay for it later.
- We never refuse in the Work.
- Animals are nature's experiments and embody all the emotions.
- A cat is all essence. Essence remembers.
- All that falls from the wagon is lost.

In an out-of-print publication titled [Jane Heap 1887–1964 As Remembered by Some of Those She Taught](#) published by Two Rivers Press in 1988, Nesta Brooking recalls Heap's extraordinary presence at the group's special Work-day celebrations:

It was chiefly through the recurring festivals that we learnt something of the meaning and presentation of food. Such richness we had never experienced, and through the octave the preparations continued towards Christmas, Easter, Whitsun, and others. The difficulty of buying enough of unusual and rationed goods [during World War II] for

dishes from far-off countries with their unique and pungent aromas and often colorful elaborations, was always overcome one way or another. Here was an opportunity for those permitted to assist in that venture...

During this pre-Paris period [before any of the group members had gone to Paris to meet Mr. Gurdjieff, after World War II], much alteration and decoration took place in Jane's house, and here the insistence upon the combination of practical logic and stability, and upon the aesthetic side in appearance, was a continual reminder. Jane's sure color-sense, practical but always inspiring with that unusual magic touch, was eye-opening. One learnt of the different tempos demanded by the care of tools, different paint and materials, and the laws behind color-mixing, all bringing to light our own ignorance and lack of depth in study. In spite of that "all-that-falls-from-the-wagon-is-lost" baffling our ears, we could but begin again. And again.

So, this woman, this Jane Heap, who was once arrested and fingerprinted for printing chapters from James Joyce's *Ulysses* and who later held her own in wisecrings about modern art with Gertrude Stein and her circle—this Jane Heap who finally proclaimed that "art today is not a very important or adult concern...It is interesting only as a pronounced symptom of an aimless society"—this plain Jane from Kansas who sometimes accompanied her father on rounds in the asylum ended up having a very classy sense of real art, real mentation, and real work, and like her own wise and cagey mentor, she was able to pass that impression on to her spiritual heirs.

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[Rob Baker was a former co-editor of [Parabola Magazine](#). He wrote frequently on the arts for such publications as *DanceMagazine*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Soho Weekly News*, and *The New York Daily News*. He is the author of *The Art of AIDS: From Stigma to Conscience*.]

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Great Harmonizer Tuning Up

Gurdjieff, Levantine Expert on Food, Drink and Idiocies, Picks New York City for Culture.

The New York Sun, January 27, 1931

THE GREAT HARMONIZER received The Sun reporter in Apartment Q, one of the six apartments which he maintains at 204 West Fifty-ninth street. A curious group of folk sat around the long, narrow luncheon table, bare but spread with exotic foods—stuffed vine leaves, pungent soups, bear meat, Asiatic fruits and luscious melons. A bearded man who spoke nothing but Russian, and that only occasionally, sat at one end. Two lovely Oriental-eyed children sat next to him.

The Great Harmonizer, massive and solid, with shaved head and great walrus whiskers, held down the other end, and between were several women, each of a different nationality, each garbed in a colorful costume, one in a sort of flowing Asiatic garment, long earrings and a colorful sari....

[The complete text is available in the [printed copy](#) of this issue.]

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

G. Gurdjieff Explains

A Letter to the Editor

The New York World, February 6, 1931



As the information published recently in various New York journals both about me personally and my activities, as well as about the reasons for my being now in America, is misleading and even impugns my objectively quite sincere, benevolent and grateful attitude toward Americans, an attitude which has been formed in me during the last seven years and of the significance of which everybody will, I am sure, be soon indubitably aware, I have decided to offer a brief explanation, through the medium of your esteemed columns, of the real reasons for my present visit to America....

[The complete text is available in the [printed copy](#) of this issue.]

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

The Armenian Boy Sarkis

a Gurdjieff Anecdote

One day Mr. Gurdjieff happened to be lunching alone at a small Paris restaurant. His attention was called to a table nearby where he saw a couple, clearly very anxious about the boy sitting with them. He seemed almost like an animal greedily eating the food before him. He was fat, very fat, far overweight. He ate like an animal. Mr. Gurdjieff overheard one or two remarks the couple were making and knew they were talking Armenian. Now it happened that he had a great weakness for Armenians. He said they were a wonderful people of great antiquity. They had not let their country be overrun by Western civilization. They had kept up their old customs, particularly the roots of their language, which was full of old sayings, old customs of the past, and this kept their people clean and unspoiled by the slime of the West.

When Mr. Gurdjieff spoke to them in Armenian, they were clearly surprised and delighted. They got into conversation, he joined them at their table and, of course, being Mr. G, it wasn't long before they were treating him as an old friend. Only the son went on eating, taking no notice. Mr. G explained he was a Russian, a doctor, a child specialist, but of course unknown in Paris, where he was still making his reputation. They arranged to meet again and Mr. G succeeded in getting their confidence and hearing more about their deep anxiety about their son.

He told them that, in his opinion, it was their love that had spoiled the boy. His condition had become a disease. It was quite well known in Russia, where parents were often overindulgent to their children. It was fear of starvation really. They had known terrible days of famine. Their children must never know that, so they encouraged them to eat and eat well, with the result that some of them could not stop and the thing became compulsive, serious...

He was very busy, he told them, and it was only because he had a weakness for Armenians that ... well, he would make them an offer: "Give your son to me. I will cure him. It will take about three months. But there are conditions. You must not see him, write to him, or come anywhere near him during this time. Your absence is part of the cure." They were a bit doubtful about this, adoring their son and never having been parted from him. "Besides, three months ... that's a long time ... what will it cost?" Gurdjieff brushed all this aside. "It will cost what it costs. Whatever it costs, you must promise to pay it without question. Your faith in me is part of your son's cure..." Well ... finally they agreed. Probably it was only because Mr. Gurdjieff was what he was that such an extraordinary

arrangement was possible...

The first thing was to gain the trust of Sarkis—that was the boy's name—his trust and affection, that was all-important and not difficult. He had a naturally open and affectionate nature. Gurdjieff started by painting a pitiable picture of his own state. A terrible thing had happened. "Just today! Just when I was going to take off on holiday with you!" he said. "I was robbed! In business." The man would be caught, of course. He would be rich again, but for the moment he had nothing. They would have hardly enough to eat. But soon everything would be better! (He kept on inventing these 'bad luck' stories). But tomorrow never came, they had hardly enough to eat, but now they trusted each other, shared everything, it would be bound to come out all right.

Well, Sarkis believed him and began to adore him and over the next weeks, getting used to starving without noticing it, he grew into a healthy young man, ready to do anything and everything Gurdjieff asked of him. The money never turned up and they were always very poor, had to work, had to struggle to make ends meet, but together they would make it. This regime went on for weeks, Gurdjieff putting more and more work on Sarkis' shoulders, with the excuse that he himself was getting weaker, older...

At last, at the end of a long day when they had climbed all the stairs up to the top flat where they were living, Mr. G accidentally tripped over the trash can and sent the whole lot—it was full—cascading down the staircase and landings below. Starting in at once to pick up all the mess, piece by piece, and get it back in the bin, without the least sign of any blame or irritation at Mr. G's carelessness was a climax. The boy was cured, both in body and mind. Gurdjieff threw his arms round him. It was over!

At the family reunion the parents, overjoyed at their newborn son, now an athletic and normal young man, almost timidly asked Mr. G for the bill. Mr. G showed them the itemized account Sarkis and he had made together of what they had spent. Every detail was shown. The total was so small it looked ridiculous.

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Gurdjieff

International Review

Spring 1998 Issue, Vol. 1 No. 3

Special Issue on A. R. Orage

Editorial Introduction

ALFRED RICHARD ORAGE was a leading pupil of Gurdjieff. Having met Ouspensky in 1914 and later Gurdjieff in 1922, Orage surrendered the forefront of intellectual life in London to study at the Prieuré. In January 1924, Orage went to New York to help Gurdjieff with his first visit to America and later introduced and supervised the Work there.

A. R. Orage: Introduction & Bibliography

Equipped with the barest formal education, a formidable natural intelligence and an unquenchable yearning to understand, A. R. Orage emerged from British 19th Century working class poverty to survey the significant literary, psychological, political and spiritual trends of the early 20th century. Concludes with a brief bibliography.

Black Sheep Philosophers: Gurdjieff—Ouspensky—Orage

An essay by Gorham Munson, a friend and literary colleague of Orage and member of his group in New York for several years. This article was first published in *Tomorrow* (New York) Vol. 9, Issue 6, Feb. 1950, pp. 20–25. Written three months after Gurdjieff's death, a year after the publication of Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous* and months before the publication of Gurdjieff's *Beelzebub's Tales*, Munson's informed summaries



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "A. R. Orage".

"I beg myself as well as my readers not to mistake understanding for attainment; and not to imagine, on the strength of their realization of certain truths, that they possess them, or still less, that they can use them. Our being, in which alone truth is possessed, is still a long way behind our understanding."

"Religion without humanity is more dangerous than humanity without religion."

"The last degree of esoteric teaching is plain common sense."

"You can never be impartial about any person or thing until you have been impartial about your planetary body."

and penetrating observations contain little that is dated.

The Essence of Orage: Some Aphorisms & Observations

Drawn from a variety of published and unpublished sources, these extraordinary fragments provide a brief introduction to Orage's vision of the human potential for a conscious development of being.

Readers and Writers Reprints from the New Age, 1918–1921 *[Sample Only]*

Orage was editor of the enormously influential journal the *New Age* from 1907 until 1922. Under the title of "Readers and Writers", Orage contributed many essays of which these are a partial reprint. For more information on the *New Age*, see the site initiated by Dr. Robert Scholes of Brown University, an [Experimental Guide to the *New Age*](#).

Good and Evil: Nov 5 *[Sample Only]*

The first installment of a three-part round-table discussion of Gurdjieff's ideas and themes from *Beelzebub's Tales* led by Orage in November of 1927.

New Democracy Vol. III, No. 8 (New York) December 15, 1934 *[Sample Only]*

A. R. Orage: a symposium of tributes from Americans. Edited by Lawrence Morris and Gorham Munson and published by [Willem A. Nyland](#), *New Democracy* was the organ of Douglas Social Credit Committees across America. We include six of the forty-six tributes by Americans, that were published in this supplementary memorial issue.

"Do more and more, better and better, and think less and less of it."

A. R. Orage

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April 1, 1998

New English Weekly

Vol. VI, No. 5 (London) November 15, 1934

[Sample Only]

A. R. Orage Memorial Number. Soon after his return to England, Orage founded a new journal the *New English Weekly* in April 1932. This memorial issue contains five extended tributes and forty-five obituary letters to the editor. We include tributes by George William Russell, T. S. Eliot, and five letters.

Subscriptions and Reprints

A yearly subscription and/or hard copy reprints are available for those who wish to support this publication.



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

A. R. Orage

Introduction & Bibliography

by J. Walter Driscoll

Equipped with the barest formal education, a formidable natural intelligence and an unquenchable yearning to understand, ALFRED RICHARD ORAGE emerged from British 19th Century working class poverty to survey the significant literary, psychological, political and spiritual trends of the early 20th century. His literary skills and wide range of interests led him to edit the enormously influential journal the *New Age* from 1907 until 1922 when he moved from London to Fontainebleau to attend Gurdjieff's [Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man](#).

Orage had met [P. D. Ouspensky](#) in London in 1914 when the latter was on his way back to Russia, having traveled through Asia in search of the miraculous. When Ouspensky subsequently moved to London in the autumn of 1921, Orage attended his lectures about 'fragments of an unknown teaching' as a student alchemist and helped him gather an audience. In February 1922, Orage met the source of Ouspensky's gold, in the person and teachings of G. I. Gurdjieff who, with a band of followers, had fled the Russian Revolution in 1917 and was considering London as a place to immigrate to.

Gurdjieff established his Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man near Paris France, at Fontainebleau on October 1, 1922. That same month, Orage sold the *New Age* and surrendered the forefront of intellectual life in London to learn from Gurdjieff while digging ditches at the Prieuré, as the Institute at Fontainebleau became known. Orage invited his friend Dennis Saurat to come to the Prieuré a few months later in February, 1923. Saurat's [A Visit to Gourdyev](#) conveys a vivid sense of the turmoil and enormous difficulties everyone experienced as Gurdjieff struggled to establish the Institute. In [Teachings of Gurdjieff: The Journal of a Pupil](#), his record of Fontainebleau, [Stanley Nott](#) reports that Orage described this period by saying:

When I was in the depths of despair, feeling that I could go on no longer, I vowed to make extra effort, and just then something changed in me. Soon, I began to enjoy the hard labor, and a week later, Gurdjieff came to me and said, "Now, Orage, I think you dig enough. Let us go to the cafe and drink coffee." From that moment things began to change.

In January 1924, Orage went to New York to help Gurdjieff with his first visit to America. In October, after Gurdjieff had returned to France, he appointed Orage to supervise the Work in America. Then in July 1924 Orage was shocked by news that Gurdjieff was critically injured in an automobile accident and might not survive. Through Gurdjieff's subsequent recovery and decision to turn his attention to writing [*Beelzebub's Tales*](#) and [*Meetings with Remarkable Men*](#), Orage found himself the de facto leader of numerous Gurdjieff groups and group leaders across America. Among others, Gorham Munson's essays on Orage describe this period in vivid detail.

Having established something authentic in himself as a result of Gurdjieff's teaching and his own conscientious efforts, Orage went on to marry for the second time in his mid 50s and have two children with Jessie Dwight. In May 1930 he returned to England and began to establish a renewed life. He became deeply involved with political issues, was instrumental in rekindling interest in the socialist movement called Social Credit which became a fringe force in politics for many decades. He founded a new journal the *New English Weekly* in April 1932. He was planning to introduce Gurdjieff's ideas in that paper and elsewhere, when he died on the night of November 5, 1934.

On hearing of Orage's death, Gurdjieff issued the following invitation:

November 6, 1934

I have just now learned of the death of Mr. Orage, who was for many years your guide and teacher and my inner world essence friend.

I invite you to attend a meeting, to pay homage to him and to speak in his memory, on Friday evening, November 9th, at 9 o'clock, in Miss Bentley's studio in Carnegie Hall, at which time, likewise, will be played some of his favorite music and some of those pieces dedicated to him which were composed by me while he was at the Prieuré.

G. Gurdjieff

A. R. Orage: a brief bibliography

Alfred Richard Orage wrote many hundreds of essays on diverse aspects of philosophy, religion, literature, psychology, history, economics and politics. In addition to playing a major role in rendering Gurdjieff's *Beelzebub's Tales* into English, Orage edited and influenced or is discussed in an enormous body of literature. This list focuses on material by and about Orage in relation to Gurdjieff's teaching. With the exception of C. Daly King's *Oragean Version*, these sources are usually in print or available from book finders. For scholars with an interest in the entire body of Orage's writings, Professor Wallace Martin has compiled a comprehensive bibliography.

Material by Orage

- [*Readers and Writers \(1917-1921\)*](#). New York: Knopf, 1922, 181p. index.

Orage was editor of thirty volumes of the enormously influential journal the *New Age* between 1907 until 1922. Under the title of "Readers and Writers", he contributed a wealth of essays, articles and editorial comment of which this anthology reproduces 78 items.

- *The Active Mind: adventures in awareness*. London: Janus Press, 1930. Also published as *Psychological Exercises*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1930; New York: Hermitage House, 1954, 122p. Revised and subsequently published as *Psychological Exercises and Essays*. London: Janus Press, 1965, 121p., and as *The Active Mind: psychological exercises and essays*. New York: Weiser, 1965, 121p. The essays were first published as "Fifteen Exercises in Practical Psychology" in *Psychology Magazine* (New York) between April 1925 and January 1926.

About one hundred thirty psychological exercises to focus mental, vocal and visual acuity. These are complimented by fifteen essays on such topics as "The control of temper," "How to read men," "On dying daily," "Economizing our energy," and "Are we awake?"

- *Essays and Aphorisms*. With a biographical note by C. S. Nott and containing the essays "On Love," "On Religion," "What is the Soul?" and "Talks with Katherine Mansfield at Fontainebleau", London: Janus Press, 1954, 55p. limited edition of 1000 copies. Subsequently published under the title *On Love: with some aphorisms and other essays*. London: Janus Press, 1957, 72p.; New York: Weiser, 1966, 72p.

The four essays in this collection reflect the depth of Gurdjieff's influence on Orage. C. S. Nott edited the aphorisms from his personal notes on Orage's talks to Gurdjieff groups between 1924 and 1930.

- *On Love & Psychological Exercises*. York Beach: Samuel Weiser, 1998.

Both the previous titles, separately paged in one paperback volume.

- *Orage's Commentary on 'Beelzebub.'* First published in *Teachings of Gurdjieff: the journal of a pupil*; an account of some years with G. I. Gurdjieff and A. R. Orage in New York and at Fontainebleau-Avon. By C. S. Nott. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961, 254p.; New York: Weiser, 1962, 230p., index. The Weiser edition was issued with the variant subtitle; *A Pupil's Journal*. after 1978. Also issued in a variant edition as *A.R. Orage's Commentaries on G. I. Gurdjieff's "ALL and EVERYTHING: Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson."* Edited by C. S. Nott with an introduction by A. L. Staveley. Aurora: Two Rivers Press, 1985, 136p.

Orage was largely responsible, under Gurdjieff's close direction, for rendering *Beelzebub's Tales* into articulate English. Nott's personal notes compiled over several years, provide a detailed record Orage's illuminating commentaries.

Material about Orage

- Gurdjieff, George I.

Life is Real Only Then, When "I Am." The third series of *All and Everything*. Foreword by Jeanne de Salzmann. Privately printed, New York: Triangle Editions, 1975, 170p.; second enlarged edition privately printed, New York: Triangle Editions, 1978, 177p; New York: Dutton, 1982, 177p.; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982, 177p.

Orage is the only historically verifiable figure mentioned more than briefly in Gurdjieff's writing. Gurdjieff points out that Orage's appointment as leader of his study groups in the United States between 1924 and 1930 was necessitated by the devastating automobile accident he suffered and provides a vivid account of how he challenged Orage's performance, motives and preoccupation with self-observation. Gurdjieff examines the question of how we deal with death and describes the false sympathy he was repeatedly subjected to on the occasion of "the death of my close friend, Mr. Orage." He emphasizes the importance for him of November 6, 1934; the date of Orage's death and the day he began the final period of writing the Third Series.

- King, C. Daly

The Oragean Version. Privately printed in a limited edition of 100 copies. New York: 1951, 289 p., index.

Convinced that Orage's presentation was an undistorted version of an ancient teaching that would be irretrievably lost after Orage's death, King presents a rigorous and detailed formulation of material he gathered over several years of close study with Orage. Pages 257 to 269 contain King's rendering of 118 aphorisms by Orage.

- Mairet, Philip

A. R. Orage: a Memoir. London: J. M. Dent, 1936, 132 p.; revised with a new introduction by Philip Mairet, New Hyde Park, NY: University Books, 1966, 140p., index.

Mairet furnishes a discerning account of his friend's life as an influential literary and social figure. He recounts a significant anecdote about a discussion between Gurdjieff and Orage about having an aim. When asked about his "whim" or true desire, Gurdjieff responded that "it

was to live and teach so that there should be a new conception of God in the world, a change in the very meaning of the word."

- Munson, Gorham

The Awakening Twenties: a memoir-history of a literary period. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985, 317p., index.

A professional writer, Munson lived in New York's Greenwich Village when it truly was a new bohemia. This account of several major literary figures of the period includes an enthusiastic chapter on "Orage in America" and a description of Munson's month at Fontainebleau with Gurdjieff.

- Nott, C. S.

Teachings of Gurdjieff: the journal of a pupil; an account of some years with G. I. Gurdjieff and A. R. Orage in New York and at Fontainebleau-Avon. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961, 254p.; New York: Weiser, 1962, 230p., index. After 1978 the Weiser edition was issued with the variant subtitle; *A Pupil's Journal*.

Journey through this World: the second journal of a pupil including an account of meetings with G. I. Gurdjieff, A. R. Orage and P. D. Ouspensky. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969, 254p.; New York: Weiser, 1969, 253p., index. The Weiser edition was issued with the variant title, *Further Teachings of Gurdjieff: journey through this world*.

In addition to their value as the original source of Orage's Commentary on Beelzebub (see above), these companion volumes provide an extended and now classic account of life as a student of Gurdjieff with Orage in France and subsequently in New York. Nott vividly documents his sustained and intense years of inner work with these men.

- Welch, Louise

Orage with Gurdjieff in America. Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982, 142p.

Louise Welch studied with Orage during his eight years in New York. She went on to become a senior leader in the study of Gurdjieff's teaching. Welch provides a vividly personal account of Orage's background his continuing influence as a writer and editor as well as his pivotal role as Gurdjieff's representative in America.

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Black Sheep Philosophers

Gurdjieff—Ouspensky—Orage

by Gorham Munson

ON October 29, 1949, at the American Hospital in Paris died a Caucasian Greek named Georgy Ivanovitch Gurdjieff. A few nights later at Cooper Union, New York, a medal was presented to the revolutionary architect Frank Lloyd Wright. After his part in the ceremony was over, Wright asked the chairman's permission to make an announcement. "The greatest man in the world," he said, "has recently died. His name was Gurdjieff." Few, if any, in Wright's audience had ever heard the name before, which is quite understandable; Gurdjieff avoided reporters and managed most of the time to keep out of the media of publicity.

However, there was one kind of publicity that he always got in Europe and America, and that was the kind made by the wagging human tongue: gossip. In 1921 he showed up in Constantinople. "His coming to Constantinople," says the British scientist, [J. G. Bennett](#), "was heralded by the usual gossip of the bazaars. Gurdjieff was said to be a great traveler and a linguist who knew all the Oriental languages, reputed by the Moslems to be a convert to Islam, and by the Christians to be a member of some obscure Nestorian sect." In those days Bennett, who is now an expert on coal utilization, was in charge of a British Intelligence section working in Constantinople. He met Gurdjieff and found him neither Moslem nor Christian. Bennett reported that "his linguistic attainments stopped short near the Caspian Sea, so that we could converse only with difficulty in a mixture of Azerbaidjan Tartar and Osmanli Turkish. Nevertheless, he unmistakably possessed knowledge very different from that of the itinerant Sheikhs of Persia and Trans-Caspia, whose arrival in Constantinople had been preceded by similar rumors. It was, above all, astonishing to meet a man, almost unacquainted with any Western European language, possessing a working knowledge of physics, chemistry, biology and modern astronomy, and able to make searching comments on the new and fashionable theory of relatively, and also on the psychology of Sigmund Freud."

To Bennett, Gurdjieff didn't look at all like an Eastern sage. He was powerfully built—his neck rippled with muscles—and although of only medium height, he was physically dominating. He had a shaven dome, an unlined swarthy face, piercing black eyes, and a tigerish mustache that curled out to big points. In his later years he had a large paunch. But in one respect Gurdjieff's reputation followed the pattern of all the swamis, gurus and masters who have roamed the Western world: his past in the

East was veiled in mystery. Only the scantiest facts are known about him before he appeared in Moscow about 1914.

Gurdjieff was born in Alexandropol, an Armenian city, in 1866. His father was a kind of local bard. It is said the boy was educated for the priesthood but as a young man he joined a society called Seekers of the Truth, and went with this group on an expedition into Asia. He was in Asia for many years and then came to Moscow where there was talk that he planned to produce a ballet called "The Struggle of the Magicians."

The rest is hearsay. It has been said that the Seekers of the Truth went into the Gobi desert. It has been said that they were checking on Madame Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*, and at places where she said there were "masters" they found none; whereas at places unspecified by her, they did find "masters." It has been said that Gurdjieff found one teacher under whom he studied for fifteen years and from whom he acquired his most important knowledge. It has been said that several times he became a rich man in the East. This is all hearsay.

A better grade of hearsay centers around Gurdjieff in Tibet. Was he or was he not the chief political officer of the Dalai Lama in 1904 when the British invaded Tibet? According to Achmed Abdullah, the fiction writer, Gurdjieff was the "Dordjieff" to whom the history books make passing reference, supposedly a Russian who influenced the Dalai Lama at the time of the Younghusband Expedition. Abdullah was a member of the British Intelligence assigned to spy on this "Dordjieff," and when Abdullah saw Gurdjieff in New York in 1924, he exclaimed, "That man is Dordjieff!" At any rate, when there were plans in 1922 for Gurdjieff to live in England, it was found that the Foreign Office was opposed, and it was conjectured that their file dated from the time of the trouble between the British government and Tibet. According to rumor, Gurdjieff counseled the Dalai Lama to evacuate Lhasa and let the British sit in an empty city until the heavy snow could close the passes of the Himalayas and cut off the Younghusband expedition. This was done, and the British hurried to make a treaty while their return route was still open.

Much more is known about Gurdjieff after 1914. A recently published book by P. D. Ouspensky which the author called *Fragments of a Forgotten Teaching*, but which the publisher has renamed [In Search of the Miraculous](#), gives a running account of Ouspensky's relations with Gurdjieff over a ten-year period. Of his first interview with Gurdjieff, Ouspensky says: "Not only did my questions not embarrass him but it seemed to me that he put much more into each answer than I had asked for." By 1916 Ouspensky was holding telepathic conversations with Gurdjieff. He also records one example of Gurdjieff's transfiguring of his whole appearance on a railroad journey, so that a Moscow newspaperman took him to be an impressive "oil king from Baku" and wrote about his unknown fellow passenger. The greater part of *In Search of the Miraculous* consists of the copious notes Ouspensky made on Gurdjieff's lectures in St. Petersburg and Moscow, which give us the only complete and reliable outline of Gurdjieff's system of ideas thus far in print¹. It is plain from Ouspensky's exposition that Gurdjieff attempted to convey Eastern knowledge in the thought-forms of the West; he was trying to bridge the gap between Eastern philosophy and Western science.

For us in America the story of Gurdjieff is the story of three men whom I call the "black sheep philosophers." Gurdjieff was the master, and the other two—Alfred Richard Orage who died in the fall of 1934, and Peter Demianovich Ouspensky who died in the fall of 1947—were his leading disciples. I call them philosophers; others would call them psychologists; many have called them charlatans. Whatever one names them, they were black sheep: they were looked at askance by the professional philosophers and psychologists because of the different color of their teachings. Nor were they accepted by theosophists, mystics, or various occult professors. They stood apart and their appeal was to what I shall call, for want of a more inclusive word, the intelligentsia.

It is impossible to assimilate Orage, Ouspensky and Gurdjieff into any recognized Western school of thought. The New York obituaries of Gurdjieff called him the "founder of a new religion." It was said that he taught his followers how to attain "peace of mind and calm." This was an attempt to assimilate him. But Gurdjieff claimed no originality for his system and did not organize his followers; furthermore, he did nothing to establish a new religion. As for "peace of mind and calm" ... There is the incident of an American novelist who calls himself a "naturalistic mystic." In the middle of a dinner with Gurdjieff in Montmartre, this novelist jumped up, shouted, "I think you are the Devil!" and rushed from the restaurant. The truth is that Gurdjieff violated all our preconceptions of a "spiritual leader" and sometimes repelled "religious seekers."

In my view, the man was an enigma, and that means that my estimate must necessarily be a suspended estimate. The supposition that he was founding a religion will not hold up. And I do not believe he was a devil out of the pages of Dostoevski. There is an old saying that a teacher is to be judged by his pupils, and by that test Gurdjieff had knowledge that two of the strongest minds in our period wanted to acquire. These minds belonged to the English editor, A. R. Orage, and the Russian mathematical philosopher, P. D. Ouspensky. Both surrendered to Gurdjieff. Let us look at the disciples and then come to their teacher.

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[ORAGE](#), a Yorkshireman, bought a small London weekly, *The New Age*, in 1906. From then until 1922, when he relinquished the paper and went to Fontainebleau where Gurdjieff had his headquarters, Orage made journalistic history. He was remarkable for finding and coaching new writers. Among these was Katherine Mansfield, who acknowledged her great indebtedness to him as a literary mentor. Another was Michael Arlen, who once dedicated a novel to Orage in terms like these: "To A. R. Orage—slow to form a friendship but never hesitant about making an enemy." Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, G. K. Chesterton, Hilarie Belloc and Arnold Bennett debated with each other in *The New Age*, and Shaw called Orage a "desperado of genius."



The New Age was more than a literary review. It played a lively role in British political and economic movements. It began by being highly critical of Fabianism, then took a positive turn by advocating National Guilds, or Guild Socialism, as the Guilds movement was popularly called. With A.G. Penty and S.G. Hobson, Orage was one of the prime instigators of the National Guilds movement, but he always had a lingering doubt of the practicability of its platforms and in 1919 he dropped it and joined with Major C.H. Douglas to found the Social Credit movement. With him went many of the more brilliant Guild Socialists, to the mortification of G. D. H. Cole who denounced the "Douglas-*New Age* heresy."

To literature and economics, Orage added a sustained interest in occultism, and it was this that finally led him to Gurdjieff's Château du Prieuré at Fontainebleau-Avon. Nietzsche had extended the horizons of Orage's thought during his formative years, and Orage's weekly became a forum for Nietzscheans. He himself wrote two small books on that grossly misunderstood philosopher which remain the clearest expositions yet penned of the superman doctrine. On the spoor of the superman, Orage investigated theosophy, psychical research, and Indian literature, and he wrote one book, *Consciousness: Animal, Human and Superman*, which hinted at the mental exercises he practiced to enlarge and elevate consciousness. T. S. Eliot called Orage the finest critical intelligence of his generation, which is an assurance to the reader that Orage was no gull in his excursions into mysticism. In 1922, at the age of forty-nine, he cut all ties in England, went to Gurdjieff at Fontainebleau-Avon, and was set to digging trenches and washing casseroles.

At that time Gurdjieff's [Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man](#) was in full swing. With funds provided by Lady Rothermere, Gurdjieff had acquired the historic Château du Prieuré, once the residence of Madame de Maintenon, the consort of Louis Quatorze, and in latter years the property of Labori, the attorney for the exonerated French officer, Dreyfus. The institute provided a thorough work-out for the three "centers" of human psychology. Its members engaged in hard physical tasks ranging from long hours of kitchen drudgery to the felling of trees in the chateau's forest. Unusual situations, friction between members, and music insured great activity for the emotional "center." For the mental "center" there were exercises that often had to be performed concurrently with physical tasks. An airplane hangar had been set up on the grounds. This was known as the "study house" and was the scene for instruction in complicated dance movements. There were mottoes on the walls of the "study house." One of them in translation read: "You cannot be too skeptical." This was the milieu the brilliant English editor entered to become a kitchen scullion.

In 1924 Gurdjieff came to America with forty pupils—English and Russian—and gave public demonstrations of dervish dances, temple dances, and sacred gymnastics. Orage came along but did not perform the movements, although he had practiced them for a Paris demonstration. Nothing like these dances had ever been seen in New York, and they aroused intense interest. They called for great precision in execution and required extraordinary coordination. One could well believe they were, as claimed, written in an exact language, even though one could not read that language but only received an effect of wakefulness quite different from the pleasant sense of harmony most art produces. When Gurdjieff and his pupils sailed for France, Orage was left in New York to organize groups for the study of Gurdjieff's system, and for the next seven years he was engaged in this task.

Let me call up from memory one of the evenings Orage talked to a group in New York. The place is a large room above a garage on East Fortieth Street. It is Muriel Draper's flat and there is a bizarre note in its furnishings produced by the gilt throne from a production of *Hamlet* which Mrs. Draper had picked up. In those days Mrs. Draper was the "music at midnight" hostess she had been in Florence and London. By nine o'clock about seventy people had gathered. Let us look around the room. Seated well back is Herbert Croly, the founder and editor of the *New Republic*, an admirer of Auguste Comte and therefore a rationalist. A few rows in front is Carl Zigrosser, the print expert. Well off to one side is Amos Pinchot, the liberal publicist, and just coming in we see John O'Hara Cosgrave, the Sunday editor of the *New York World*. Near the front sits Helen Westley of the Theatre Guild, and always on the front row is the historical novelist Mary Johnston. Squatting on the floor up front with an Indian blanket around his shoulders is impassive Tony, the full-blooded Indian husband of Mabel Dodge Luhan, and near him, but seated on a chair is the celebrated memoirist herself; she is reputed to have bought one of the \$12,000 "shares" of Gurdjieff's Institute. Now arriving is Dr. Louis Berman, the authority on glands, and just behind him waves the handsome beard of the painter Boardman Robinson. It is the sort of crowd you might find on the opening night of *Strange Interlude*, which is currently playing on Broadway. Some of the men you would see at the luncheons of the Dutch Treat Club; some of the women at the meetings of that advanced exclusive group called "Heterodoxy." A worldly crowd, a 1920-ish crowd, for in retrospect the 1920's seems a period vibrating with intellectual curiosity.

Orage comes in a little after nine. Deliberately, he is always a little late, and often he takes a snifter of bootleg gin in Mrs. Draper's kitchen before entering the big room. He is tall, with a strong Yorkshireman's frame, an alert face, an elephantine nose, sensitive mouth, hair still dark. He is a chain-smoker throughout the meeting. He calls for questions. Someone asks about "self-observation," someone wants to know "what this system teaches about death," someone else makes a long speech that terminates in a question about psychoanalysis. After he has five or six questions, Orage begins to talk—and he talks well in lucid sentences often glinting with wit. A graduate student in psychology at Columbia objects to one of his remarks. Orage handles the objection and goes on until a progressive schoolteacher interjects a question. It is like a Socratic dialogue, with Orage elucidating a single topic from all sides. Every question eventually gets back to "the method," and by eleven o'clock he has once again illuminated the method of self-observation with non-identification that appears to be the starting procedure prescribed by Gurdjieff for self-study.

Briefly, what Orage has said is that man is a mechanical being. He cannot do anything. He has no will. His organism acts without his concurrent awareness and he identifies himself with various parts of this victim of circumstances, his organism. There is only one thing he can try to do. He can try to observe the physical behavior of his organism while at the same time not identifying his 'I' with it. Later he can attempt to observe his emotions and thoughts. The trouble is that he can only fleetingly observe with non-identification, but he must continue to make the effort. It is claimed that this method differs from introspection. The non-identifying feature differentiates it from an apperception. The man who finally succeeds in developing the power of self-observation is on the path to self-knowledge and the actualizing of a higher state of consciousness. This higher state, which Orage calls "Self-

consciousness" or "Individuality," stands to our present waking state as the waking state stands to our state of sleep.

This bare summary will not, of course, explain why so many New Yorkers came to hear Orage between 1924 and 1931. Some came only once or twice out of a weak curiosity, like Heywood Broun who listened through one meeting, then asked, "When do we get to sex?" and shuffled off, never to return. Others were fascinated by the charm and keenness of Orage's literary personality and found such epigrams as "H. G. Wells is an ordinary man with a carbuncle of genius" full compensation for the dissertations on psychology they sat through. But the solid core of his group were probably the people who prefer Plato to Aristotle; that is, people who feel that there is some kind of film over reality and respond to the idea that this film can be penetrated.

In 1931 Orage faced a personal crisis. He had married an American girl and had an infant son. Gurdjieff, a hard task-maker, wanted him to bring his family to the Château du Prieuré and continue work on the translation into English of the huge book then called *Tales of Beelzebub to His Grandson*, which Gurdjieff had written partly in Russian and partly in Armenian. Orage neither wanted to leave his family nor to put them in the never-stable environment of Fontainebleau-Avon. He decided to go to London and there founded the *New English Weekly*. On Guy Fawkes Day [Nov. 5] in 1934, he who had never addressed more than a few thousand readers addressed hundreds of thousands of B.B.C. listeners with a speech on Social Credit, went home, and died before morning.

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THE link between Orage and Gurdjieff was originally [P. D. Ouspensky](#), who came to London in 1921 and started groups for the study of the Gurdjieff system. Orage attended these, as did Katherine Mansfield, and both went to the source at Fontainebleau. As explained by Ouspensky, there were three main ways to a higher development of man: the way of the fakir who struggles with the physical body, the way of the monk who subjects all other emotions to the emotion of faith, and the way of the yogi who develops his mind. But these ways produce lopsided men; they produce the "stupid fakir," the "silly saint," the "weak yogi." There is a fourth way, that of Gurdjieff, in which the student continues in his usual life-circumstances but strives for a harmonious development of his physical, emotional and intellectual life—the non-monastic "way of the sly man." The accent was on harmonious, all-around development.

Ouspensky was a highly mental type. At his lectures in New York he seemed like a European professor. He was not nervous in manner and he had a peculiar kind of emotional serenity; one felt that it did not matter to him what his listeners thought of him. In his youth he had been fascinated by the problem of the fourth dimension, the nature of time, and the doctrine of recurrence. When only thirty-one, he wrote a book, *The Fourth Dimension*, which was recognized as a contribution to abstract mathematical theory. He also practiced journalism for a St. Petersburg newspaper. At thirty-four, he completed the book on which his popular fame rests, *Tertium Organum*. This book had a great influence on the American poet, Hart Crane, an influence Brom Weber has carefully traced in

his biography of Crane. But *Tertium Organum* is a pre-Gurdjieffian work, and much of it has to be reset in a later pattern of Ouspensky's thought, as he implied in a cryptic note inserted after the early editions. Ouspensky also wrote a short book on the tarot cards, which are surmised to contain occult meaning.

The young Russian thinker attempted to be practical about his speculative thinking. He made trips to Egypt, India and Ceylon in search of keys to knowledge. He experimented with drugs, fasting and breathing exercises to induced higher states of consciousness. When he met Gurdjieff in Moscow in 1914, he was ripe for a teacher.

As the years went on, Ouspensky began to make a distinction between Gurdjieff the man and the ideas conveyed by Gurdjieff. Remaining true to the ideas, he finally decided about 1924 to teach independently of the man Gurdjieff. The last chapter of *In Search of the Miraculous*, deals with this "break," but it is too reticent to make the "break" understood.

Ouspensky held groups in London throughout the 1920's and 1930's, and had a place outside London for his more devoted pupils, some of whom were quite wealthy. When the bombs began to rain on England, he and a number of his English pupils migrated to America and purchased Franklin Farms, a large estate at Mendham, New Jersey. In New York he lectured to shifting groups of sixty or so, while at Mendham his wife supervised the pupils who carried out farm and household tasks as part of their psychological training. Instruction in the Gurdjieff dance movements was also given at Mendham.

Ouspensky's later books have included *A New Model of the Universe*, begun in pre-Gurdjieff days but revised and completed under his influence, and a novel, *Strange Life of Ivan Osokin*, which has a flavor that reminds one of Gogol. Although Ouspensky has written extensively on relativity, the professional physicists appear to have given him a cold shoulder; at least, he is never mentioned in scientific literature. However, *A New Model of the Universe* produced a great impression on the novelist J.B. Priestly, who wrote one of his most enthusiastic essays² about it.

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GURDJIEFF was by far the most dramatic of the trio; in fact, Gurdjieff as a pedagogue was mainly an improvising dramatist, a difficult aspect of his character to explain briefly. Most people believe that they can make decisions. They believe that when they say "Yes" or "No" in regard to a course of action, they mean "Yes" or "No." They think they are sincere and can carry out their promises and know their own minds. Gurdjieff did not lecture them on the illusion of free will. Instead, in conversation with a person, he would produce a situation, usually trivial and sometimes absurd, in which that person would hesitate, perhaps say "Yes," then change to "No," become paralyzed between choices like



Zeno's famous donkey starving between two equidistant bales of hay, and end full of doubt about any "decision" reached. If the person afterwards looked at the little scene he had been put through, he saw that his usual "Yes" or "No" had no weight; that, in fact, he had drifted as the psychological breezes blew.

Often, in his early acquaintance with a person, Gurdjieff would hit upon one or both of two "nerves" which produced agitation. These were the "pocketbook nerve" and the "sex nerve." He would, as our slang goes, "put the bee on somebody for some dough," or he might, as he did with one priest from Greece, egg him on to tell a series or ribald jokes. The event often proved that he didn't need the money he had been begging for. As for the poor priest, when he had outdone himself with an anecdote, Gurdjieff deflated him with the disgusted remark, "Now you are dirty!" and turned away. "I wished to show him he was not true priest," Gurdjieff said afterwards. To go for the "pocketbook nerve" or the "sex nerve" was to take a short cut to a person's psychology; instead of working through the surfaces, Gurdjieff immediately got beneath them. "Nothing shows up people so much," he once said, "as their attitude toward money."

There are legends about how Gurdjieff came by the large sums of money he freely spent. It has been rumored that he earned money by hypnotic treatment of rich drug addicts. There used to be a tale that he owned a restaurant, or even a small chain of restaurants, in Paris. His fortunes varied extremely, and there were times when he had little money. He lost his chateau at Fontainebleau-Avon in the early 1930's. His expenses were large and included the support of a score or two of adherents. He tipped on a fabulous scale. Money never stuck to his fingers but he himself did not lead a luxurious life. He joked with his pupils about his financial needs and openly called his money-raising maneuvers "shearing sheep."

When the Bolshevik revolution struck Russia, Gurdjieff moved south. He halted at various places, notably at Tiflis, to launch groups, but eventually he and his followers crossed the Caucasian mountains on foot and made their way to Constantinople. Via Germany, he reached France where, as related, Lady Rothermere enabled him to found the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man at the Château du Prieuré. This Institute, Orage once told me, was to have made Bacon's project for an Academy for the Advancement of Learning look like a rustic school. But in 1924, Gurdjieff met with an automobile accident which nearly killed him, and thereafter he turned to the less strenuous activity of writing. The Institute plans were canceled, and he began the tales of Beelzebub as told to his grandson on a ship in interstellar space. This book is a huge parable with chapters on the engulfed civilization of Atlantis, the "law of three" and the "law of seven," objective art, and many riddles of man's history. It purports to be an impartial criticism of the life of man on the planet Earth. In this period Gurdjieff also composed many pieces of music, making original use of ancient scales and rhythms.

In the last year or two of his long life, Gurdjieff finished with his writings and intensified his direct contacts with his followers. Movement classes were started in Paris, and several hundred Frenchmen now come more or less regularly to these and other meetings. In England the exposition of Gurdjieff's ideas is carried on by the mathematical physicist, J. G. Bennett³. Bennett is the author of *The Crisis in*

Human Affairs, an introduction to the Gurdjieff system. It is said that Bennett attracts about three hundred to his lectures and that the class in movements numbers nearly two hundred.

Gurdjieff spent the winter of 1948–49 in New York, as usual unnoticed by the press. The remnant of the old Orage groups came to him, as did the Ouspenskyites from Mendham and many new people. With Oriental hospitality, he provided supper night after night for seventy and upwards in his big suite at the Hotel Wellington, the supper being punctuated by toasts in armagnac to various kinds of idiots: "health ordinary idiots," "health candidates for idiots," "health squirming idiots," "health compassionate idiots." When Gurdjieff drank water, he always proposed, "health wise man." Prepositions were left out of the toasts; Gurdjieff spoke a simplified English that often required an effort to follow. After the supper, Gurdjieff's writings were read until the small hours of the morning. While he was here, he signed a contract with a New York publisher to bring out in 1950 the English version of the 1000-page tales of *Beelzebub*, under the title *All and Everything*. It is also expected that after the book appears, his American pupils will give a public demonstration of the dance movements.

Gurdjieff had passage booked for America last October but fell gravely ill. An [American doctor](#) flew to Paris, had him removed to the American Hospital, and made him comfortable. "Bravo, America!" he said to the doctor. "Now we can have a cup of coffee." Those were his last words.

How shall I sum up this strange man? A twentieth century Cagliostro? But the evidence about Cagliostro is conflicting, and the stories you will hear about Gurdjieff are highly conflicting. I can personally vouch for his astonishing capacity for work. Two to four hours' sleep seemed sufficient for him; yet he always appeared to have abundant energy for a day spent in writing, playing an accordion-harmonium, motoring, café conversation, cooking. Those who had to keep up with him were sometimes ready to drop from fatigue, but he seemed inexhaustible after twenty hours and fresh the next morning from a short sleep. He was eighty-three this last winter at the Hotel Wellington. He would retire at three or four in the morning. Around seven the elevator boys would take him down and he would go over to his "office," a Child's restaurant on upper Fifth Avenue. Here, as at a European cafe, he would receive callers all morning.

I have sometimes asked myself what our civilization of specialists would make of certain men of the Renaissance—men like Roger Bacon, a forerunner, and Francis Bacon and Paracelsus who came at the height—if they reappeared among us. I think we would find them baffling, and it would be their many-sidedness that would puzzle us. The biographers and historians have never quite known how to take their scandalous unorthodoxy. To me Gurdjieff was an enigma whom I associate with the stranger figures of the Renaissance rather than with religious leaders. He never claimed originality for his ideas but asserted they came from ancient science transmitted in esoteric schools. His humor was Rabelaisian, his roles were dramatic, his impact on people was upsetting. Sentimentalists came, expecting to find in him a resemblance to the pale Christ-figure literature has concocted, and went away swearing that Gurdjieff was a dealer in black magic. Scoffers came, and some remained to wonder if Gurdjieff knew more about relativity than Einstein.

"A Pythagorean Greek," Orage called him, thus connecting the prominence given to numbers in the Gurdjieffian system with Gurdjieff's descent from Ionian Greeks who had migrated to Turkey. Perhaps this appellation, "Pythagorean Greek," is as short a way as any to indicate the strangeness of Gurdjieff to our civilization, which has never been compared to Greece in its great period from the sixth to the fourth centuries before Christ.

How shall we account for the interest persons of metropolitan culture in the Western world have shown in the Eastern ideas of Gurdjieff and his transmitters, Orage and Ouspensky? One explanation is easy, and it holds for people who seek respite for their personal unhappiness in psychoanalysis, pseudo-religious cults, and the worship of the group (nostrism as manifested in Communism and Fascism). This is the therapeutic interest, and many who have come to the Gurdjieffian meetings have had it. Let us disregard this common interest and ask why Eastern ideas have attracted in these years the interest of sophisticated thinkers like Aldous Huxley who has been remarkable for his typicality. The answer here is that Western culture is in crisis. Ours is a period of two world wars and one world depression. In this period it has been impossible for a thoughtful person not to have been deeply disappointed in his hopes for man. He has seen one effort after another produce an unintended result. World War I made the world unsafe for democracy. The prosperity of the 1920's led to economic drought. World War II turned into cold war. The socialist dream flickered into a totalitarian nightmare. Science becomes an agency of destruction. The doctrine of progress gives place to the feeling the Western man is at a standstill. In a crisis one hopes or one despairs. Gurdjieff, Orage and Ouspensky confirmed the despair but simultaneously raised the hope of Westerners whose mood was disappointment over the resources of their culture. It is said that Aldous Huxley, that modern of moderns, went to a few Ouspensky meetings in London. Eventually Huxley settled for Gerald Heard who draws heavily on Eastern philosophy. In Huxley we may find a symptom of a desperate tendency to turn in our crisis to ideas and teachings that stand outside the stream of Western culture. Orage, Ouspensky and Gurdjieff painted a crisis-picture—in one part as black as any school of Western pessimism, in another part so bright as early Christianity. In this balance-by-contrast of the dark and the light is a principal reason for their appeal to moderns.

1. As of February, 1950. Ed.
2. Published as Chapter 13 in Priestley's *Midnight on the Desert* (New York) Harper, 1937.
3. Also by [Jane Heap](#) from 1936 to 1964 and by [Mme Henriette H. Lannes](#) from 1950 to 1980.
Ed.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

The Essence of Orage

Some Aphorisms and Observations

Edited by [J. Walter Driscoll](#)

This selection of fragments is drawn from a wide variety of sources and introduces Orage's unified vision of the human potential for a conscious development of being. In places, Orage's formulation of Gurdjieff's ideas, cosmology and teaching employs Gurdjieff's own phrases and expressions.

~ • ~

Consider the 'sly' man; he *tries* to be aware always.

•

You can never be impartial about any person or thing until you have been impartial about your planetary body.

•

Common sense mellowed and experienced is wisdom; and wisdom in its ripeness is beauty.

The last degree of esoteric teaching is plain common sense.

~ • ~

The birthright of human beings is the desire for self-consciousness, which should appear at the age of majority. At about the age of thirty there should come a sense of the world in which we live, the dawning of cosmic consciousness. After this, according to one's gifts, conditions, circumstances and so on, one should become a conscious

agent in the functions of the cosmos, which is a total scheme of which we would have a relative comprehension.

•

There is little difference in the experiences of different people—the difference consists in what they do with them. The importance of our first food is not so much in the quantity and quality as in the digesting of it. Experiences are another form of food; from this point of view it does not so much matter *what* happens as how we take experiences.

•

Nature is the objective creditor of every living being. She is, from one aspect, the wicked step-mother of the fairy tales, beguiling us and using us for her own purposes, the evolution of substances.

•

Time is the most important thing next to awareness. The flow of time through us gives us an opportunity to extract what we can. Time is the three-fold stream flowing through our three centers. We fish in time's 'ever-rolling' stream; what we catch is ours, but what we don't is gone. Time does not wait for us to catch everything in the stream, but if we catch enough we shall have enough to form the higher bodies—and thereby become enduring.

•

There is an 'I', a potential soul. If we can say with the same simplicity 'I have a body' as we say 'I have a car' we can begin to realize that this body is a transforming machine which 'I' have. 'I' have a machine to use, does not mean 'I' am a machine. 'I' have a body, a mechanical organism whose function it is to transform substances and energies.

•

The advantage of the terrible disadvantage of being human is to be able to be glad—whether happy or unhappy—and, by achieving consciousness, to become greater than the angels. We, becoming conscious beings, are the mind of God; angels are his emotions and there is more joy in heaven over one of us perfected, than over ninety-nine naturally evolved angels.

~ • ~

The universe is a being with three centers corresponding to our own; their material aspect is comprised of vibration-rates which appear to us as substances.

The universe is the body of God; it is the neutralizing force of the Sun Absolute, the manifestation of the interaction of the positive and negative forces of God. We live in the body of God, are made in the image of God and God's 'fancy' is immortality.

God is the "I" of the universe, is termed His Endlessness and is not inferior to time. Time is a perpetual perishing. It is the enemy of God. He has a purpose. Our Hope depends on our ability to discover His purpose and co-operate with it. This is the definition of religion, helping God.

•

The universe as a conscious being is the third dimension of time.

•

Humanity is the mind of God and the passion for understanding the meaning and aim of existence.

•

Conscience is a function of a normal human being; it is the representative of God in the essence; it is buried so deeply that it remains relatively indestructible.

•

Truth before God is essence; 'truth' before man is personality.

•

Essence is a chemical deposit from the sun and planets of the solar system, which enters earth-beings at the moment of conception. In man this affects the region of the solar plexus. It is unlike any of the chemicals found on this planet, and links man to the cosmos. As the chemicals of the physical body return to this planet after death so do the chemicals of essence return to their sources.

•

Faith, Hope and Love are the growing ends of essence.

Faith is confidence, not belief; for example the way a lion walks through the woods.

Hope is effort, not wish; an effort to make it so and not a wish that it may be so.

Of love the first form is of self and of self in others; the second form is love of others and of self in them; the third form is love of duty or God and the other forms are by-products of it; that is, it is love of that for which the individual exists.

A being is defined in value according to the degree to which faith, hope and love have become objective in him.

•

Pondering is answering questions from essence and answering them practically.

One-half the energy of a human being must be spent internally pondering.

One-third of one's time should be spent in pondering.

Pondering is a self-interrogation which consists in stripping off all the answers of association until you finally come to your own essential answer.

•

Essence is what we inherit; personality is what we acquire.

~ • ~

Beings differ in the *potentiality* of their awareness.

•

Being and non-being are two absolutes between which is a state of existence moving in either direction, that of evolution or that of involution. The range of existence between positive absolute and negative absolute provides the scale of beings, of which man is the third from the highest and metal is the lowest.

•

Being has to do with the feeling center and depends on knowing and doing. It is the result of the struggle between the affirming and denying parts. 'A being is one who feels', and is therefore to be graded by the range and intensity of feeling. Any attempt to attain superior being directly leads to a psychopathic state. This is the fallacy of mysticism, which involves imaginary feelings.

•

Being *is* the emotional center but it is only the result of a conflict between knowing and doing. You must try to know and to do in order to be; that is the value of knowing and doing. Man is a superior species on earth because there is a great conflict between knowing and doing in his case. Men among themselves should also be graded in this way. For the same reason, the equal development of centers is necessary.

•

The gradation of beings objectively is according to their inner development. In life, people are 'respected' for their abnormality, not for their inner development or degree of objective reason.

~ • ~

A human being is one who works with three centers; he who works with one or two is sub-human and every time we repress the working of a center we become a two- or one-brained being.

•

Ordinary man is at the mercy of his organism: —at the mercy of the instinctive center; impressions received by the senses, of appetites, inertia, disease; —at the mercy of the feelings; associations connected with people and places past and present, likes and dislikes, fear and anxiety; —at the mercy of the mind; imagination, day-dreaming, suggestibility.

•

Reasoning is the locomotion of the thinking center, which is composed of definite organs—concentration, pondering, meditation, contemplation. Logical progression is the ordinary locomotion of the thinking center as a whole. Life in the planetary body is sensation; in the astral body, emotion; in the mental body, thought.

•

Neurotic symptoms are due to the three centers being out of step with each other, out of harmony—one center being in a definitely different tempo and intensity from the others.

•

The emotional center is the dynamo of our whole life. In it are our wishes, which maintain us and our bodies in life. Wishes are on different planes. The highest wish, once felt, never can be displaced.

•

Suffering comes from the conflict of centers. (Taken consciously upon oneself, when one center wishes and the others dislike it, it can become Conscious Suffering.)

•

Voluntary conscious labor is made against the inertia and mechanism of the organism; not for personal gain or profit, exercise, health, sport, pleasure or science; not out of pride, like or dislike. With conscious work, individuality takes the place of personality. Individuality grows from essence and is the consciousness of will.

•

Learn to know when you are making effort consciously by your experience of making effort physically. You are making an effort when you are "pushing against the collar." You do this when you try to include more phenomena in consciousness that would be there naturally, a continuously sustained effort to include in immediate awareness more and more that is not there, beginning with your own body.

•

Specific gravity controls the grasping of thoughts. In each of the three centers are depths in which related items lie. All thinking, feeling and instinctive perception is associated; and there are interrelations between corresponding depths in different centers. These interrelations between the three centers compose the total associative psychology of humanity.

•

Center of gravity can be compared to absolute pitch. Any variation is a little abnormal. Every form has its own center of gravity, each substance the same. Permanent dwelling place or habitual center of gravity of whatever center you are most often in, has to do with Chief Feature.

~ • ~

The only real understanding that can ever be acquired depends upon a certain substance which can only be formed in a particular manner. This substance depends upon three factors: the presence of understandings of a like nature which become relatively positive and negative, and the new piece of knowledge which is the neutralizing force. The result of the three is a new understanding.

One set of previous understandings says yes and another set denies, and there is a certain friction created; the result of this clash is perceived as a new understanding (which may be either according to knowledge or according to essence and thus be either temporary or permanent, and that is decided by whether the individual makes effort when the clash occurs).

If effort is not made, the new understanding is perceived only according to the specific gravity *of the words* and this is at random and thus mixed with uncorresponding items; but when effort is made, each direction of the clash is appreciated consciously (through the effort) and the final result will be *directed*. So it is that people can not be *told* anything of value but must first get the necessary substance and then make effort to achieve understanding.

Because external events which unwind us do not fit into a recognizable order, we have the illusion of freedom. This is why we do not learn from experience. According to the Law of Association, all things seek their level in the scale of being. Ordinarily, experiences are automatically distributed according to former associations; but when effort is made, they can go to their correct places in the centers.

~ • ~

The harmonious development of man: an "all-round" man according to the original definition, is one who is equally at home in all three centers, a man who is really in occupation of his house; that is, all three stories of it. To produce such men is the purpose of the Gurdjieff teaching, which rules out the three forms of monstrous genius.

~ • ~

The states of consciousness are Sleep, Waking, Self-Consciousness, Cosmic

Consciousness. *Waking* is a pseudo-state of consciousness; there are really only three forms and our waking state is abnormal among states of consciousness. *Self-Consciousness* is consciousness of self; self is that amount of the original conceptual seed that has been actualized, and its form is the body; therefore Self-Consciousness is consciousness of our body. *Cosmic Consciousness* is consciousness of the Cosmos, it is the awareness that there exist other planets than our own, other suns and the Sun Absolute, and that they are the centers of a being; it is thus a consciousness of the body of God.

•

Consciousness is an electrical phenomenon which arises from a state of being which we can *feel*.

In our usual opinion there are two forms of electricity, positive and negative; but there is also a third form; namely, the field within which the positive and negative forms are related to each other. Any manifestation of positive and negative electricity implies a fulcrum; that is, a point of resistance over which they balance.

Every existing thing (or being) is ultimately composed of three forces, positive, negative and neutralizing; insofar as the thing is developed, these three are separated into three centers instead of being blind; thus development is the increasingly separate organization of these, together with the provision of organs for each.

The neutralizing force is non-existent except by definition, since it is the *field* wherein phenomena take place; neutralizing force is difficult to define because we are third-force-blind. There is the same difficulty in defining consciousness because it is the *field* of its content.

~ • ~

We are completely mechanical with the exception of self-observation and what that makes possible. Self-observation is the letter, 'A', of consciousness; it is the first conscious ability that can be attained; if you cannot observe your self, you are completely unconscious.

Unless we remember ourselves, we are completely mechanical. Self-observation is possible only through self-remembering. These are the first steps in self-consciousness and to become self-conscious in our highest part is to become a part of God. But the fruit arrived at is never attained; it is always—if any—an unanticipated by-product. It is more even than unanticipated, it is usually not realized for a long time after it has been attained. Our friends may see it, a crisis may prove it to us, but, as a rule, our

development from self-observation is imperceptible to ourselves. I know this would sound like an act of faith, but it is not credulity. Truly a tree is known by its fruit, but the seasons must pass before the fruit appears.

The aim of self-observation, however, apart from its results, is clear; to see ourselves as others. When I can be, for myself, my neighbor, and my neighbor, for me, myself, I shall have attained the objectivity of a normal human being. Thereafter the development of the spirit and soul will be as normal as is now the growth and development of the body.

After all, it is very strange that we do not grow spiritually as a matter of course and time. We have to make no effort to mature bodily from infancy to adulthood. Why does not the same law govern our psychic development? Gurdjieff's reply is the old religious reply: it is because Man has fallen; that is, has become psychically abnormal; and hence it is that in his psyche the laws governing bodily growth cannot apply.

Self-observation is simply (!) a means of attaining normality, and this is a prime condition of subsequent normal development. Once normalized the psyche can take care of itself; but its normalization is the stumbling-block. Therefore, said Paul, "I labor till Christ be born in ye."

Christianity has always insisted upon the mystery of the Incarnation; namely, how does a spirit which is the son of God, have the use of a physical body? Self-observation is only a survey of the body; Participation is practice in making it work; Experiment is seeing what you can do with it; and all these are the preliminaries of Incarnation.

Churches may encourage our confinement to one center but religion is a means for expanding being, for enlarging consciousness. Religiousness is an emotional attitude to the question, "Why was I born?" and prayer is wish in three centers expressed as effort in three centers. Religion is the study and practice of perfection. This is expressed by Matthew [5:48] as "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

~ • ~

The reason of ordinary beings is the reason of knowledge. The reason of normal beings is the reason of understanding. Knowledge is a temporary part of being and can change; understanding is a permanent and unchangeable part of the being.

A man can behave otherwise than his knowledge; he cannot behave otherwise than his understanding, which circumstances can never overcome. Knowledge must be repeated often in order to be permanently gained; understanding is incorporated into essence

forever.

Instinctive reason we share with the animals but have a higher type of it; associative reason functions according to verbal associations; of objective reason we know practically nothing—it can be acquired only by voluntary conscious labor and intentional suffering.

Objective reason is that which is immortal. It is developed by going against habits and repetition; by following a legitimate whim; by not doing as others do. The effort I make to become objective transforms substances which thereby become permanent, immortal. I acquire a permanent 'I' which is independent of the vicissitudes of life, aware of a conscious purpose, which persists through ups and downs, through runs of good and bad luck.

Contemplation is contact with thought-forms left by other beings interested in objective reason but no statement can be understood without the effort of conscious assimilation. When that which is known is also felt and sensed, we have realization.

We are a passion for understanding the meaning and aim of existence but we have only instinctive passions and thus fail to understand. Not one in a million has any interest in man as differentiated from himself; or else he is interested only in some happiness-reform. Being 99% abnormal, the-meaning-and-aim-of-existence means only instinctive advantage; and it is therefore an academic question. We are not on a plane where these questions have any real meaning for us.

•

Of the three lines of evolution perceptible to man (and hence attributed by him to nature), the highest, because the most inclusive, is spiritual evolution defined as the self-perception of self. But between, first, this verbal definition and the realization of its meaning; and secondly, the realization of its meaning and its actualization in being—there may be aeons of difference. From merely understanding that the highest value is self-objectivity (the ability, that is to say, to see everything thought of as self exactly as if it were not self) it does not follow that we have it, any more that it follows that if we understand that gold is of more value than silver, we necessarily possess gold. The attainment of the state of self-objectivity is something totally different from its understanding just as acquiring gold is something totally different from the appreciation of its value.

What I am therefore disposed to say of the problems already referred to is that their understanding and appreciation need to be supplemented by something entirely different before they can be solved; and that, in fact, the modern mind, even when

desirous of objectivity, is incapable of solving such problems for the simple reason that the modern mind is not, in actuality, self-objective.

I beg myself as well as my readers not to mistake understanding for attainment; and not to imagine, on the strength of their realization of certain truths, that they possess them, or still less, that they can use them. Our being, in which alone truth is possessed, is still a long way behind our understanding. Is then, Progress a "myth"? I do not know. Is it, on the other hand, a fact in Nature? Again, I do not know. Nor do I find it necessary to settle the question one way or the other for my peace of mind. To understand what the question implies, to be satisfied that one can not answer it now, but to *hope* to be able one day to answer it, that, I think, is enough...

~ • ~

There is more joy in heaven over one of us perfected, than over ninety-nine naturally evolved angels.

•

There is a complete protection available to you—silence.

~ • ~

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Readers and Writers

(1917–1921)

by [A. R. Orage](#)

CONTENTS:

[Preface](#)

[The Criteria of Culture](#)

[How to Read](#)

["Shakespeare" Simplified](#)

[The Newest Testament](#)

[Psycho-Analysis and the Mysteries](#)

My most confident prediction, however, remains to be confirmed: it is that the perfect English style is still to be written. That it may be in our own time is both the goal and the guiding-star of all literary criticism that is not idle chatter.

Preface

UNDER the title of "Readers and Writers" and over the initials "R. H. C."—the "C" occasionally becoming "Congreve" for other purposes—I contributed to the *New Age*, during a period of seven or eight years, a weekly literary causerie of which the present volume, covering the years 1918–1921, is a partial reprint. My original design was to treat literary events from week to week with the continuity, consistency and policy ordinarily applied to comments on current political events; that is to say, with equal seriousness and from a similarly more or less fixed point of view as regards both means and end. This design involved of necessity a freedom of expression distinctly out of fashion, though it was the convention of the greatest period of English literature, namely, the Eighteenth Century; and its pursuits in consequence brought the comments themselves and the journal in which they appeared into somewhat lively disrepute. That, however, proved not to be the greatest difficulty. Indeed, within the last few years an almost general

demand for more serious, more outspoken and even more "savage" criticism has been heard, and is perhaps on the way to being satisfied, though literary susceptibilities are still far from being as well-mannered as political susceptibilities. The greatest difficulty is encountered in the fact that literary events, unlike political events, occur with little apparent order, and are subject to no easily discoverable or demonstrable direction. In a single week every literary form and tendency may find itself illustrated, with the consequence that any attempt to set the week's doings in a relation of significant development is bound to fall under the suspicion of impressionism or arbitrariness. I have no other defence against these charges than Plato's appeal to good judges, of whom the best because the last is Time. Time, if ever it should condescend to reconsider the judgments contained herein, will pronounce upon them as only those living critics can whose present judgments are an anticipation of Time's. Time will show what has been right and what wrong. Already, moreover, a certain amount of winnowing and sifting has taken place. Some literary values of this moment are not what they were yesterday or the day before. A few are greater; many of them are less. And I think I can afford to look on most of the changes with equanimity. My most confident prediction, however, remains to be confirmed: it is that the perfect English style is still to be written. That it may be in our own time is both the goal and the guiding-star of all literary criticism that is not idle chatter....

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Discussion on "Good and Evil"

with [A. R. Orage](#)

November 5th [1927] — Part 1 of 3

[Eleven numbers were taken.]

Reese: As I remember, there was originally no such conception of good and evil as we have now; it grew out of the idea of positive and negative. It's a degeneration of these ideas, in which such a state as hunger, for instance, can be thought evil.

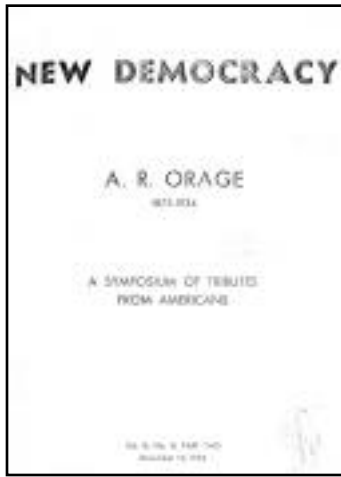
Orage: You remember that these concepts of good and evil never came into man's experience until objective reason had degenerated. There was discrimination of values before then but it was disinterested—qualitative differences arising from differences of nature. After the decline of objective reason, this discrimination became associated with emotional center and its interests and there came good and evil in place of positive and negative.

Lucille: There was no neutralising element present, was there?

Orage: You remember that a certain being was supposed to have introduced good and evil into the world. His mistake was pointed out, that he had insufficiently stressed the neutralising element. The question arises whether in his mind he thought of good and evil as one neutralising force—a force beyond good and evil, as it were. But the fact is that his hearers had no concept of neutralising force in good and evil. We shall perhaps see what the neutralising force is in these ideas—something which is neither good nor evil but partaking of both....

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

NEW DEMOCRACY

A. R. Orage

A Symposium of Tributes from Americans

Vol. III No. 8: Part Two
December 15, 1934

CONTENTS

[Orage As Religious Man by Allan R. Brown](#)

[Orage As Teacher by Lawrence Morris](#)

[The Ideal Editor by Gorham Munson](#)

[The Renaissance Type by Carl Zigrosser](#)

[Obituary letter by Edna Kenton](#)

[Obituary letter by Elizabeth Delza](#)

*To Orage religion
was a part of being,
not a vestment on
being. He could
neither for himself nor
for others be satisfied
with realization in the
place of actualization.*

Orage As Religious Man

by Allan R. Brown

In the popular sense a religious man is a follower of a recognized religious creed. Such a man need not be religious at all. As they used to say in the mysteries, "The thyrsus bearers are many but the bacchics are few," that is, there are many formal adherents but only a few actually feel in themselves the presence of God. The truly religious man has somehow become aware that there is an ultimate purpose in the universe. He has lost his life and found it again in that larger purpose, which we may call divine.

In this functional sense Orage was a signal example of religious man. Jesus said, "Be ye perfect even as your father in heaven is perfect." This infinite and impossible ideal as he called it was the heart of religion for Orage. "Religion is the study and practice of perfection," he said. He never allowed subjective interests to swerve him from his devotion to this purpose, to the no small mystification and annoyance of some who could not comprehend. He thought, he wrote, he acted, not for himself, not for man, but for God. God, truth, righteousness, cosmic purpose, perfected normality,—each must use the term correspondent to his own understanding. Orage said God. He defined religion as the attempt to establish an ideal and conscious relation between man and God, thus distinguishing it from its most colorable imitations in the form of morality, neighborliness or humanitarianism....

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

A. R. Orage Memorial Number

NEW ENGLISH WEEKLY

A Review of Public Affairs, Literature and the Arts

Vol. VI. No. 5.—Thursday, November 15, 1934—SIXPENCE

CONTENTS

[Orage: Memories—George W. Russell \(Æ\)](#)

[Orage: Memories—T. S. Eliot](#)

[Mr. Richard Aldington](#)

[Mr. A. J. Penty](#)

[Mr. Will Dyson](#)

[Mr. Holbrook Jackson](#)

[Mr. J. S. Collis](#)

Æ (George W. Russell)

*As I came to more
intimacy with his
mind I found that his
best wisdom had
never been printed.
...he had a lamp
within him which
could illuminate the
darkness. Almost
everywhere I explored
in his mind I found the
long corridors lit.*

I first met the mind of Orage in the notes he wrote weekly in the *New Age* two or three years before the war. I had found a number of that journal, unheard of by me before, and I had hardly read more than a page when I began to feel an intellectual excitement. Here indeed was a swordsman of the mind. I forget now what bubbles they were he was pricking with such glittering persistence. What interested me was the quality of the intellectual passion which inspired him. It had its roots in more profound motives than the emptiness of the bubbles that were blown. I divined the idealist speaking from depths of thought and feeling which are rare in journalism. When I met him I found what I

surmised of him was true. The roots of his culture were in antiquity, in the wisdom of sages of the Kapila, Vyassa or Patunjali, a wisdom which though dated thousands of years ago is still as many thousands of years perhaps in advance of contemporary thought. The study of these had given age to his thought, and the habit of seeing everything in relation to the profundities of being they spoke of. Yet this did not make of him a man out of place in his time, uttering thoughts that others could not understand. With the surface mind he could be as modern as anyone, and I do not know of any contemporary journalist who could so swiftly penetrate to what was essential in a policy, its emptiness or its fullness....

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Gurdjieff

International Review

Summer 1998 Issue, Vol. I No. 4

Special Issue on Le Prieuré

Editorial Introduction

Having migrated for four years after escaping the Russian revolution with dozens of followers and family members, Gurdjieff settled in France and established his Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man at the Château Le Prieuré at Fontainebleau-Avon in October of 1922. This issue presents reminiscences which describe activities at the Prieuré from different points of view—some with great understanding and some with critical reserve or journalistic disdain.

The Forest Philosophers

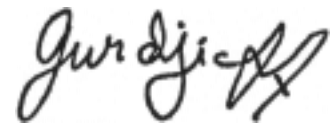
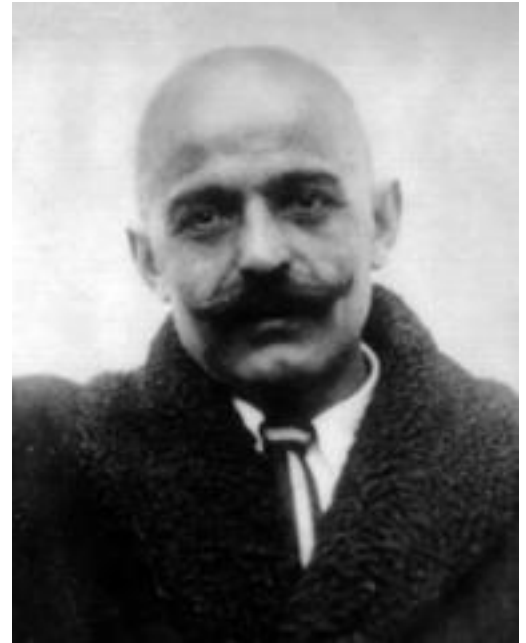
[Sample Only]

Journalist Carl Eric Bechhofer Roberts first met Gurdjieff in Tiflis in 1919. This account of life at Fontainebleau was first published in *Century Magazine* (New York) in May 1924 and in *The World Today* (London) in June 1924. His *In Denikin's Russia and the Caucasus, 1919-1920*, contains the first description of Gurdjieff published in English.

New Cult: Forest Temple of Hard Work and Rough Food

New Life Cult: For "Harmonious Development"

The New Cult: Aesthetic Aids to Meditation



"If we do what we like doing, we are immediately rewarded by the pleasure of doing it. If we do what we don't like doing, the reward must come later. It is a mathematical law and all life is mathematics."

G. I. Gurdjieff

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July 1, 1998

New Life Cult: "The Master" on His Forest School

[Samples Only]

Daily News, London, February 1923. A series of four articles written by journalist E. C. Bowyer during his visit to Gurdjieff's Institute which had opened five months earlier. These articles ran as front page headlines beside coverage of the excavations of Tutankhamon's tomb.

A VISIT to Gourdyev

[Sample Only]

The Living Age, January 1934. Denis Saurat visited the Prieuré for a weekend in February 1923; the same weekend as E. C.

Bowyer, author of the previous series of articles. Saurat describes their exchange in the Study Hall. This skeptical article became raw material for subsequent skepticism about Gurdjieff among French intellectuals and journalists.

An Experiment at Fontainebleau: A Personal Reminiscence

[Sample Only]

The New Adelphi, September 1927. Like his colleagues Dr. Mary Bell and Dr. Maurice Nicoll, Dr. James Carruthers Young abandoned the practice of Jungian therapy to work at Fontainebleau. The ideas of Ouspensky are presented and their application at the Prieuré. He sketches Gurdjieff and concludes by depicting the state of mind that led to his departure from the Institute.

Taking the Life Cure in Gurdjieff's School

[Sample Only]

The New York Times, February 1924. Maud Hoffman, author of the Theosophical classic *Light on the Path*, friend of Maurice Nicoll and James C. Young, shares her enthusiastic and vividly observed glimpse of daily conditions at the Prieuré.

[Some Memories of the Prieuré](#)

First published here, this invaluable first hand sketch of life at the Prieuré in 1923 by Dr. Mary C. Bell was written in September of 1949 and gives a warm, lively glimpse of the way Gurdjieff guided his pupils.

[The "Forest Philosophers"](#)

New Statesman, March 1923. Clifford Sharpe responds to misleading published reports about the Prieuré. Modest and scholarly in tone, this account stands out for its informed insight into the workings of Gurdjieff's Institute. The title of this piece became a journalistic catch phrase of the day.

— Other New Features —

[Gurdjieff Heads the Newest Cult, Which Harks Back to Ancient Days](#)

[Sample Only]

New York Evening Post, January 1924. Raymond Carroll provides a journalist's jaunty account of "Gurdjieffers," the "weird and fantastic Gurdjieff cult" which had just arrived in the U.S. for the first time.

[On Man's Place in the Scheme of Things Between the Planets and the Moon](#)

[Sample Only]

This review of P. D. Ouspensky's, *In Search of the Miraculous*, by Bernard Metz was first published in *The Christian Register* in January of 1950. Bernard Metz was one of Gurdjieff's translators and personal secretaries at the Prieuré for about a decade.

[Commentary on Exchanges Within](#)

A review of John Pentland's *Exchanges Within*. A long-time student of John Pentland, Dennis Lewis points out Pentland's "remarkable ability to *translate* Gurdjieff's teachings into the exact language needed to help each seeker experience herself or himself as a living question in the face of the unknown."

Good and Evil: Nov 12

[Sample Only]

The second installment of a three-part round-table discussion of Gurdjieff's ideas and themes from *Beelzebub's Tales* led by Orage in November of 1927.



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

The Forest Philosophers

by **C. E. Bechhofer Roberts**

[Journalist Carl Eric Bechhofer Roberts first met Gurdjieff in Tiflis in 1919. His *In Denikin's Russia and the Caucasus, 1919-1920*, contains the first description of Gurdjieff published in English. He warmly recounts being guided by Gurdjieff on an unusual tour of Tiflis, especially the baths and restaurants. Roberts notes that this "curious individual named Georgi Ivanovitch Gurdjieff... was still surrounded by this strange entourage of philosophers, doctors, poets and dancers. He was not exploiting them; on the contrary, several of them were living on his diminishing means." Later in this journey, Roberts describes listening to his long-time journalistic acquaintance, P. D. Ouspensky's engaging renditions of light-hearted Moscow and Essentuki adventures while they shared a bottle of vodka that Ouspensky prepared from pure white spirit and orange peel. Subsequently, out of curiosity, he made several visits to Gurdjieff's Institute at the Prieuré but "preferred to remain an intimate and disinterested spectator." This account of life at Fontainebleau was first published in *Century Magazine* (New York) in May 1924 and in *The World Today* (London) in June 1924.]

*Among the many bizarre cults to which disillusioned men and women have turned since the war for spiritual stimulation, none has obtained more disciples of note than the so-called "Institute for the Harmonic Development of Man" at Fountainebleau. Mr. C. E. Bechhofer Roberts, who in his novel "The Brahmin's Treasure" dealt with part of the "mysticism" underlying this symptom of a disordered epoch, has here written the first full description of the colony of esoterics. [the Editors of *The World Today*, June 1924.]*

OF all the mystics who have become prominent in Europe during the last twelve years or so, and especially since the war, when their numbers have been doubled, I cannot recall that any has attracted so much interest in so short a time as George Ivanovitch Gurdjiev, the founder of the "Institute for the Harmonic Development of Man" at Fountainebleau, near Paris. I exclude Rasputin from this statement both because his "mysticism" was of a somewhat peculiar nature and because his notoriety was due rather to political than to intellectual influence.

The wider public first became interested when Katherine Mansfield, the writer, died in the institute; immediately people were interested to know what mysterious sort of place this was where the clever young author had preferred to pass the last months of her life. And yet reliable information has been lacking. Except for one or two vague articles in two London papers, no account of Gurdjieff's institute has, I believe, yet appeared in print. I shall endeavor to set down here the main theories that underlie Gurdjieff's methods and the form they take in practice....

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

A VISIT *to* Gourdyev

by Denis Saurat

[*The Living Age*, New York, January 1934, Vol. CCCXLV (4408), pp. 427–433. Originally published in French as *Visite à Gurdjieff*. Denis Saurat visited the Prieuré for a weekend in February 1923. Saurat describes his contradictory impressions of Gurdjieff who appears alternately contemptuous, provocative, irritable then finally serious and "extraordinarily courteous." This skeptical article became raw material for subsequent skepticism about Gurdjieff among French intellectuals and journalists. Saurat later revised his opinion of Gurdjieff and his teaching and came to recognize [Beelzebub's Tales](#) as a major work. NOTE: The English spelling of Gurdjieff's name had not yet stabilized and is here given as 'Gourdyev' in keeping with the Russian pronunciation.]

Ten years ago M. Saurat visited Gourdyev's school of wisdom at Fontainebleau under the auspices of [Mr. A. R. Orage](#) who is now best known for his advocacy of the Social Credit theory.

SATURDAY morning, February 17th 1923. The Fontainebleau station. Orage comes to meet me when I arrive by train from Paris. Orage is a big Yorkshireman of vague French descent: hence his name is taken from the French word for storm. For fifteen years he has been a power in English literary circles. He owned a half-literary, half-political weekly review, the *New Age*, which was the most lively intellectual organ in England between 1910 and 1914.

Orage might have been the greatest critic in English literature, which has produced few critics, and which is dying of that lack, though it revives every time a writer of genius emerges and joins a great tradition. But Orage sold the *New Age* and went to Fontainebleau: literature interested him no more....

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

An Experiment at Fontainebleau

A Personal Reminiscence

by James Carruthers Young

[First printed in *The New Adelphi*, London, Vol. I (1), September 1927, pp. 26–40. Like his colleagues Dr. Mary Bell and Dr. Maurice Nicoll, Dr. James Carruthers Young abandoned the practice of Jungian therapy to work at Fontainebleau. Originally delivered to the Medical Section of the British Psychological Society, his essay describes the ideas Ouspensky presented in London and Young's experience of their application at the Prieuré. He sketches Gurdjieff and concludes by depicting the state of mind that led to his departure from the Institute.]

I DO not doubt that there are many and varied opinions about the nature and significance of the Institute founded in 1922 at Fontainebleau by George Gurdjieff, a man of Greek or Georgian nationality (I never knew which for certain). Probably there are as many different opinions as there were people who went to the Institute or who stayed in London and wove the fabulous things which they heard about it from friends who had been there into their dreams. There remain, also, the opinions of those who had no other information than that derived from the descriptive articles and the inevitable pictures which appeared in the *Daily Mail* or *Daily News*. The headline of one of these articles ran: "The Forest Philosophers." I remember that this caption amused me hugely at the time. It also exercised me, because I have had moments such as Raskolnikoff in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* must have had when he asked himself "Am I Napoleon or a louse?" I was not quite sure whether I was philosopher or fool!...

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Taking the Life Cure in Gurdjieff's School

by Maud Hoffman

[A friend of Mabel Collins, author of the Theosophical classic *Light on the Path*, Maud Hoffman shared a fashionable Harley Street house in London with doctors Maurice Nicoll and James C. Young before moving to Fontainebleau. Her enthusiastic and vividly observed glimpse of daily conditions at the Prieuré was first published in *The New York Times*, February 10, 1924.]

An Intimate Description of the Russian's Institute in France, Whose Aim is the All-Round, Harmonious Development of Man

During this last Summer the inhabitants of Fontainebleau and Avon, in France, and the Summer visitors at the hotels flocked to the old Prieuré des Basses Loges to see the Saturday evening demonstrations of the work done there by the pupils of the Gurdjieff Institute. The demonstrations are given in a large aerodrome, erected by the pupils, which comfortably accommodates more than sixty pupils and several hundred visitors. The stage is large enough for forty people to take part in the exercises at the same time, and a large space covered with Persian carpets, remains free in the centre.

The pupils sit around this square space on goatskins and cushions in the Oriental fashion. The interior of this study house has been decorated with color, drawing, stenciling and designs. The whole of the extensive canvas ceiling—and every buttress, beam and space is covered. The colors are rich and vivid, as are the windows. All the work of painting and designing has been done by the pupils themselves....

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Some Memories of the Prieuré

by Dr. Mary C. Bell

[First published here, this invaluable first hand sketch of life at the Prieuré in 1923 by Dr. Mary C. Bell was written in September of 1949 and gives a warm, lively glimpse of the way Gurdjieff guided his pupils.]

Hôtel Réna, Paris, September 1949

My readers I hope will not expect from me anything profound and indeed, I shall try only to paint lightly some of the happenings in our life at Le Prieuré in 1923. The story, though, really begins on Christmas Day, 1922, when I went over for a week.

Picture to yourselves a long, gaily decorated table, with a bottle of wine in front of each guest—Mr. G. is seated in the middle of one side of the table, with his Mother and family round him.

The guests are mainly Russian refugees and English. The meal begins with vodka and sardines, and some care is needed to avoid catching the eye of any Russian—for if you meet Mr. So and So's eye, he will promptly rise in his seat and toast you: and courtesy demands that at each toast you empty your glass.

It gave the Russians great amusement to try and make the English drunk. The food consisted of Russian dishes—but Mr. G. had told four of the English, under the guidance of Lady Rothermere, to make a Christmas pudding. The materials were there in abundance: but how to cook it? The array of copper saucepans that decorated the kitchen did not meet with their approval, and faute de mieux, they cooked the pudding in copper.

After the meal, Mr. Page, a sedate, awkwardly moving city man gave us, involuntarily, a marvelous exhibition of coordinated muscular movements. Having honourably drunk his bottle of wine, he threw his handkerchief on to the floor, placed the empty bottle upright on his head, and, without

mishap, picked up the handkerchief in his teeth.

At that time the study house had not been acquired, and the evenings were spent in the large salon of the chateau, a spacious room with a beautiful parquet floor. And yet there was no sense of incongruity when the door opened and a bewildered day old calf pushed its head in, gently propelled from behind by Mr. G. It was in that salon that I first heard the moving music for the "Initiation of a Priestess," with lovely Mdme Ostroffsky, Mr. G.'s wife, as Priestess and Peropontoff as Priest.

~ • ~

When I returned in March the Study House was being erected. It was an old hangar. Passing through a small lobby, one entered an almost square space with a low stage thrown out at the further end. Against the walls were couches for any who wished to rest, and a six foot foyer to which strangers were admitted; but the centre portion, divided from the foyer by a low partition, was reserved for the pupils alone. Against the partition were slightly raised seats, each covered by a goat-skin, which were allocated to the pupils, men on the right and women on the left. Mr. G.'s seat was a tented Divan on the right side of the entrance into the Central Square. The floor of the square was covered with Eastern rugs, and in the centre was a fountain with a slowly revolving disc of many coloured glass and the colour of the water appeared to change from minute to minute. The piano was in the foyer at the left of the stage. The stage was raised about fifteen inches and covered with linoleum, and the front sloped in a gentle curve to the floor. Again there was no sense of incongruity when a kid, that was being brought up in the kitchen came to the Study House one evening and, having discovered the slope, spent a happy hour slithering down it again and again.

The roof was covered with gaily painted cloths, interspersed with sayings from Eastern literature, also painted in large Arabic characters on cloth. All these were the work of pupils, carried out during a period of intensive work, and the thousands of sequins used in the decorations glittered continually in the changing lights of the fountain.

About nine o'clock Mr. G. entered the Study House, where the pupils were already quietly seated after their hard day's work, and the activities would continue until about 2 a.m. Mr. de Hartmann was at the piano. Many evenings we began with the six Obligatory Movements, after which the programme was very varied. The various large groups might be danced—the Initiation of a Priestess, The Dervish dance, the Big Prayer, the Little Prayer, the Enneagram—or there might be Eastern country and occupational dances. Or the evening might be devoted to the working out of new Movements.

At other times the activities took place in the centre. Seated on the floor we would learn the most complicated exercises, involving in one exercise the simultaneous use of legs, arms, heads, expression of emotions and one or more sequences of words in any language.

On occasion ten or twelve of us would be picked out, and, seated in the middle of the floor, we had to

memorize words in any language supplied to us by the others. We began with ten and chanted them from 1 to 10 and 10 to 1 until we knew them, and then another ten was added, and then another ten and so on, until at the end of an hour, chanting up and down the whole time, we had memorized a list of seventy or eighty words.

We had to learn a sign language of numbers, so subtly constructed, that when skillfully done we could communicate numbers to one another in the middle of a large crowd without being observed, and in connection with this language, we memorized, during our daily occupations, a list of 100 names of animals in Russian, with their numbers in the list, and also 100 operas in the same way. We also learnt the Morse Code. All these were subsequently used for the bewilderment of the large number of people who came down from Paris and other places, by invitation, on Saturday evenings to see the performances. They would be told that if they selected an animal from the list, or an Opera, by the power of the pupils' concentration, the choice would be communicated to Mr. de Saltzmann, seated with his back to the audience before a black board on the stage, or to Mr. de Hartmann at the piano, and the animal would be drawn or the opera played. In reality, Mdme de Hartmann, at the back of the Study House, communicated the numbers by signs to a watcher, usually Mr. Tchekovitch, who was perched on a ladder in the dark outside the window of the stage, and he signalled it back to Mr. de Saltzmann or Mr. de Hartmann. The Morse Code had, I think, an even more striking use. One of the audience selected from a list the name of a pupil, which was passed on to Mr. de Hartmann, and the audience were told that Mr. de Hartmann's impressionist improvisation on the pupil selected would be so marvelous that the rest of us would know without doubt who it was. But again we must look for the reality. Interspersed in the short improvisation, accentuated notes in Morse Code soon told us the name of the pupil, and with Mdme de Saltzmann often in the lead, we called it out to the astonished audience. Before leaving the Study House, I must speak of one last most beautiful memory.

We were told to run or walk and "stopped." Within my line of vision I saw Vladush, a Polish boy of about sixteen. He was not very tall and his face was pale and aquiline in cast, and that evening he was wearing an embroidered Russian costume with jeweled cap. The beauty of his pose, with one foot forward for the next step, with head erect and relaxed arms, was so striking that Mr. G. told us all to come and look at him.

~ • ~

As regards the daily occupations, most people were allocated to their work, but some were left to choose. As a broad division, the Russian women did the cooking and housework, while all the men and the Englishwomen worked out of doors. Miss Marston and Miss Gordon were in charge of the garden. Miss Potter undertook the laundry. Miss Crowdy at first got up daily at six to milk the cows, but was subsequently put in charge of stores. Then there were the geese and chickens and goats, not to mention the mule—and the men did all the heavy work, the building and wheel-barrowing and felling of trees. The work was always there to be done, but ordinarily we were not driven; if we chose to slack it was our own loss, but during periods of intensive work, which might last for two or three hours when a garden path was chosen for urgent hoeing, or for days when the Study House was being

decorated, or orchestral parts were needed for the Paris Orchestra before the first demonstration in Paris, the drive was intense, and Skurra, Skurra, Skurra resounded through the grounds. But always, after the spell, came the welcome words "Go, rest." We were soon taught that pointless, slogging work was of no avail. As Mr. Gurdjieff pointed out to Mr. Pindar when barrow-loads of stones were being moved from one part of the grounds to another, "One stone consciously moved is worth all this pile."

To prevent idle talk and wandering thoughts, and the wisecracking that inevitably occurs when pupils try to discuss subjects they don't yet understand, great use was made of memory work and lists of words, and three or four people hoeing close together would almost certainly be helping one another to memorize the words.

The great identification with one's work also brought its own reward. A superfine dinner would be ordered, but when it was prepared, there was no one to eat it, and when the flowerbed round the large lawn in front of the Château was at its best four or five calves were carefully driven along a section of the bed. I think I am right in saying that inertia over one's work was also deliberately prevented. One day when we were decorating the Study House, we had all been working for some time very peacefully when Mr. G. appeared. He made one short quiet remark in Russian, and in a second the place was like the parrot house at the Zoo.

~ • ~

The fast excited us a great deal. It was voluntary, but scarcely anyone refused to undertake it. The first two days we were allowed water, but the third day not even that; the fourth day the juice of one orange, and of two on the fifth. Some of us, to our disappointment, were put on to food again at the end of a week, others fasted for three weeks. It was part of my work to weigh everybody and take the pulse rate two or three times each day. Approximately speaking, people lost a kilo a day for the first four days, after which some remained stationary, and some put on a small amount of weight. We had to prepare ourselves for the fast with enemas, and I am sure that that accounted for the fact that most of us suffered very little from hunger or desire for food. I could sit and talk with equanimity to people eating the well-known English dish of eggs and bacon. Throughout the fast physical work and exercises in the Study House were carried on as usual. At the end of the fast the intake of food during the first twenty-four hours was carefully restricted. One of my memories of the fast is of vastly improved complexions.

~ • ~

The food was very variable—sometimes, especially in the summer time when there were a good many visitors we lived well—at other times we did not. There were curious restrictions—the English were allowed three lumps of sugar with their tea or coffee—the Russians only two. And although nearly 2,000 lbs. of tomatoes were picked in the garden, we never could understand why so few appeared on the table. I think the bulk of them were made into jam and chutney. The surplus milk

from the cows was made into soured milk (Prostock vacha?) and butter, and the goats' milk into cheese. For some time before Easter even the butter, milk and eggs were, if I remember right, cut off and saved the for the Easter Feast—and the kitchen was scrubbed from ceiling to floor for the cooking of the Feast. This wonderful Feast, which began at midnight on the morn of Easter Day, was eaten seated on the floor of the Study House, and is notable in my memory for the beautiful singing of the Easter Mass by the Russians. So many of their men had such lovely voices. Then they suggested that the English should sing part of their Easter Service. The effect was deplorable. None of the English could sing, we had no hymn book, and our memory of the words was very hazy.

~ • ~

As well as the pupils there were two or three patients. Katherine Mansfield, who was dying of phthisis [phthisis pulmonalis or tuberculosis], spent the last month of her short life there. Mr. G. had great belief in the efficacy of the breath and aroma of cows in the healing of chest complaints, and had the hay-loft above the cow-stalls converted into a lounge with couches, where patients could rest. In order to wile away the tedium, the ceiling had been decorated by Mr. de Saltzmann, with portraits of the people. I always regret that I was not there in time to be included, but I well remember Mr. de Hartmann, a gentle-faced man, with a very noticeable nose, portrayed as a Toucan, and Dr. Jimmy Young as an ape.

There were also notable visitors, the Grand Duke Michael lunched with Mr. G. one day, and Algernon Blackwood came to inspect us and Middleton Murry was also there.

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In September occurred what I think must have been the first of the trips to Chamonix. The car-load consisted of Mr. G., Mdme Ostroffsky, Mdme de Hartmann and myself, Dr. Kessiloff, Dr. Maurice Nicoll and Vladush, the Polish boy. We left the Prieuré at midnight, and at 3 a.m. were seated on the grass by the side of the road, under a glorious, starlit sky, supping off sardines and vodka, goat and beet root etc. The journey was broken for coffee at an inn about breakfast time, and for lunch with a rest afterwards by the roadside, after which we pushed on to La Feucille in the Jura mountains where we slept, continuing the comparatively short run to Chamonix the next day. Never shall I forget the taste of the trout at dinner: one has to have undergone a long period of somewhat monotonous living in order to savour the full flavour of trout. We started back next morning and reached La Feucille in heavy rain. But nothing deterred the indomitable driver. Coming down the Juras, the car skidded. It shot to the right almost on the mountain railway by the side of the road—it was jerked round and went headlong for the precipice on the other side—and when it finally came to rest it was facing up the hill—and a small voice—Vladush's from the back of the car said, "I don't think I was really afraid." Later we stopped at an inn and Mdme Ostroffsky lost her heart to a black and white puppy—Philos. It was brought out to the car, apparently surreptitiously, wrapped up in a rug. Dr. Nicoll and I were quite sure it had been purloined. I, personally, would not have been surprised if it had been, after all the tricks we'd been taught! Dr. Nicoll, however, went into the inn and paid for it

again. The rest of the journey was uneventful, except that I sometimes wondered whether the various level-crossing gates would give way before the charge that seemed imminent, and we reached the Prieuré at 6 a.m.

In the late autumn, Mr. G., after a demonstration in Paris, took about fifty of the pupils to America to demonstrate the Movements, and I had left the Prieuré before his return.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

The "Forest Philosophers"

by Clifford Sharpe

[First printed in the *New Statesman*, London: Part I, Vol. XX (516), March 3, 1923, pp. 626–627; Part 2, Vol. XX (518), March 17, 1923, pp. 687–688. Clifford Sharpe responds to misleading published reports about the Prieuré. Modest and scholarly in tone, this account stands out for its informed insight into the workings of Gurdjieff's Institute. The title of this piece became a journalistic catch phrase of the day.]

CONSIDERING how many fairly well-known English writers have been attracted by the work of the Gurdjieff Institute at Fontainebleau, and by the parallel teaching of [Mr. Ouspensky](#) in London, it seems rather strange that so little should have appeared about it hitherto in the English Press. The explanation, however, is simple enough. No one who takes the trouble seriously to investigate the subject is inclined to write about it until he has investigated it a little more, and the more he investigates the less inclined he becomes to write about it at all. The subject-matter of the teaching is at once so new and so vast in its scope that the task of describing even any one single aspect of it, that one may have grasped, seems impossible of accomplishment in anything less than a stout volume. The present writer would certainly not have been tempted to write a line on the subject but for the large number of almost wholly misleading articles and paragraphs that have been appearing in English newspapers during the past fortnight. It is no more possible than it was before to offer in an article, or even in a series of articles, an adequate description of the teaching itself, but it may perhaps be desirable to attempt to indicate its general trend, and to state a few facts about the two men who have brought it to Paris and to London.

Mr. Gurdjieff is of Greek origin but spent his youth in Persia. His disciple, Mr. Ouspensky, who came in contact with him in 1915, is a writer and an experienced scientific psychologist of Russian nationality, who enjoyed before the revolution a considerable reputation in his own country. The movement originated some thirty years ago in an expedition organized by Mr. Gurdjieff—then very young—and two Russian savants, with the object of discovering, if possible, what lay behind the fabled 'wisdom of the East'. Five years were spent in gathering and training a band of about thirty investigators, mostly Russians, who between them might claim to know all that Europe knew of

science and art. They then set out for that little-known region which lies between Eastern Persia and Tibet and there separated, each to seek entry into some 'school' where esoteric knowledge might be found. It must suffice here to say that after several years a few of them returned and organized a second expedition. Some of the members of both expeditions are still in Central Asia and will probably never return. Others, including Mr. Gurdjieff, after spending the best part of twenty years in various Eastern schools,¹ came back to Europe and are now engaged in working upon the mass of material that they brought with them while maintaining communication with those who have remained behind.

Of the nature of this material the present writer cannot speak with confidence. He has been informed that it covers almost every branch of human knowledge, with the exception of pure mathematics, regarding which the East appears to have nothing to teach the West; but of personal experience he can speak of only three subjects—psychology, music and medicine. In regard to these he has been convinced that Mr. Gurdjieff and his colleagues possess knowledge which is far in advance of anything that is known to European science. Naturally, he cannot convey his conviction to the reader. All he can do is to suggest the general nature of the superiority which he affirms. In psychology the analysis is infinitely more subtle, more comprehensive and more scientific than the work of, for instance, William James—who would certainly have become a keen student of Eastern methods after half an hour's conversation with Mr. Gurdjieff. For Mr. Gurdjieff appears to possess full and exact knowledge of the nature, causation and practical reproduction of those rare phenomena of hyper-consciousness in which James was so greatly interested. In music the East appears to possess a knowledge of the precise emotional effects of rhythm and tone that was never dreamt of even by a Mozart. In medicine Mr. Gurdjieff appears to have access to a full knowledge of principles which have scarcely yet even begun to be studied in Europe. At Fontainebleau he has what is perhaps the most complete installation of medico-electrical apparatus in the world. Western science has a certain knowledge of radiology, of the therapeutic effects, that is to say, both of sun-light and of certain artificial rays, but its knowledge of radiology in this direction is at present purely empirical. It knows something of the 'how' but almost nothing of the 'why'. Gurdjieff knows possibly less of the 'how' but vastly more of the 'why'. He may know less, too, of the appearance and habits of the specific bacilli of disease, but he knows far more of the natural forces of the body by which bacilli may be rendered harmless. Western science tells us that the 'cause' of pneumonia is the pneumococcus; it also tells us that the pneumococcus may be found in the throats of nine healthy people out of ten; but it tells us nothing of why it successfully attacks this person and not that. It can only fall back upon some such vague phrase as 'lowered vitality'. Mr. Gurdjieff's medical knowledge might, perhaps, be briefly described as an ability to give a scientific explanation of what that phrase means—or rather of the many different meanings which its vagueness covers—and to suggest methods of promoting the capacity of resistance to infection, or of combating its results.

The above must be regarded merely as a general indication of the nature of part of the material which these explorers have brought back from the East. The writer has not the authority either of Mr. Gurdjieff or of Mr. Ouspensky for any of the statements in this article; he is describing merely his personal deductions and impressions. Quite certainly there is real knowledge to be obtained from contact with this new 'cult', which asks no man to believe anything which, if he has the time and the

ability, he cannot prove for himself. Indeed, it condemns and forbids unsupported belief. Its fundamental precept is that all knowledge is worthless that is not grasped with that certainty which personal verification alone can give. This article itself is not written to convince, but merely to explain and to suggest. Those who consider such matters worth investigation must of necessity investigate for themselves, and will probably have to spend very much time in the process. The Gurdjieff movement is not a 'reforming' or a proselytizing movement. It seeks neither converts nor money. Nor does it seek, in the ordinary sense of the phrase, to 'do something for the world'. It requires certain workers, not easily to be found, but to others it may have little or nothing to offer. As a movement it is neither religious nor democratic; its appeal, for the present at any rate, is not to the million.

The Gurdjieff 'Institute' at Fontainebleau has lately been described at considerable length by a correspondent of the *Daily News*; but his description conveys almost nothing of the real work that is being done there, even on its purely physical side. The life is very simple and uncomfortable, the food is adequate but too starchy for an ordinary stomach, the work is extremely hard. The physical work, indeed, results often in a degree of exhaustion which perhaps exceeds anything that was produced even by a prolonged spell in the winter trenches of Flanders in 1917. Yet behind it all there is no theory either of asceticism or of the 'simple life'. Abstinence is not praised, physical work is not idealized or exalted. Work at Fontainebleau is a medicine and a curse. Carried to extremes it creates increased capacity for effort and provides rich material for self-study—no more than that. Cold, hunger and physical exhaustion are things to be endured not for their own sake, nor to acquire 'merit' of any description, but simply for the sake of understanding the physical mechanism, making the most of it, and ultimately of bringing it into subjection. Other conditions provided at the 'Institute'—with an ingenuity that is almost diabolical—offer similar opportunities for the study of the emotional mechanism, but that side of the work cannot be described in a few words or sentences, and must here be passed over.

The Gurdjieff Institute has been compared in the Press by Mr. T. P. O'Connor and others with various experimental 'colonies' which have been established in Europe or America during the past few decades. All such comparisons, however, are entirely mistaken, and would not be offered by any one who had spent twenty-four hours at Fontainebleau, seeing all that there is to be seen there. As far as the writer's knowledge goes, the only recorded institution with which Mr. Gurdjieff's school can at all plausibly be compared is the school which was established in southern Italy by Pythagoras about 550 B.C. The Pythagoreans lived in a colony and were subjected to all kinds of abstinences and physical exercises as a preparation for the extraordinary intellectual work which they accomplished. They were deeply concerned with rhythm, with movement, with the analysis of the octave, and with other apparently irrelevant subjects which are studied at Fontainebleau. In some respects the parallel is indeed almost absurdly exact. Pythagoras himself was a Greek who spent many years in Eastern Persia and Afghanistan, and who on returning to Europe established a school for the study and teaching of music and mathematics. He was indeed the founder of European mathematics, of the European theory of music, and of European astronomy. He taught the doctrine of re-incarnation before Buddha; he laid the foundations and solved the crucial problems of pure geometry 200 years before Euclid was born; and he described the earth as a sphere and a planet revolving with the other

planets round a 'central fire', 2,000 years before Copernicus. Indeed, it is probably only the mystery which surrounded the work of his 'school'—wherein no discovery was ever ascribed to an individual—that has prevented his being acclaimed the greatest scientist of all time. It is not suggested here that Gurdjieff is another Pythagoras, but if parallels are to be sought this particular parallel is certainly irresistible—and no others are adequate, save perhaps some which might be discovered in the origins of Gothic architecture. So far at any rate as the modern world is concerned, the Gurdjieff Institute is a unique phenomenon. Its possibilities are either nothing or else almost infinite.

The 'wisdom of the East' is *not* a fable. That is the conclusion which these remarkable expeditions have brought back to Europe. But it is wisdom which cannot easily be summarized in a pamphlet or even set forth in the most massive tomes. Like the work of Einstein, its nature can be suggested, but it cannot be fully explained save to those who are prepared to spend many years in studying the foundations upon which it is built. For its direct exposition no language exists, nor, perhaps, ever will exist. The formulae of Einstein will probably be as incomprehensible to the general public a thousand years hence as they are to-day. Human knowledge, when it passes beyond a certain point, can only be grasped with the aid of natural faculties which have undergone a severe and prolonged training. In Mr. Gurdjieff's school that training is physical and emotional as well as intellectual. The general public will never be able to grasp the meaning of his work. It will be able to judge it—if at all—solely by its results; and what is written here has no other purpose than to interest that probably tiny minority which can appreciate the magnitude of the possibilities of the work upon which Mr. Gurdjieff and his colleagues are engaged. Very much more certainly will be heard of them.

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The psychological aspect of the Gurdjieff-Ouspensky teaching might be briefly described as the practical, detailed and infinitely painstaking application of the ancient precept: Know thyself. All the teaching is strictly practical. Only enough theory indeed is given to provide a language in which the results of self-study can be recorded and mutually related. The student may, if he likes, believe all he is told, but he is always reminded that belief is not knowledge, and can be of no value to him until he has verified it by direct self-observation; and he is continuously discouraged from discussing ideas, or even using words, of which he cannot offer concrete illustrations drawn from his own experience. The system thus contains its own test. As taught by Mr. Ouspensky, psychology is less a science than an art—the art of self-study.

A fundamental idea of the system is the attribution of all the motive forces of normal man to three distinct centres: mental, emotional and moving (or instinctive). The mental centre is the vehicle, not of all consciousness, but of all ratiocination. The emotional centre needs no definition. The moving or instinctive centre is the instrument: (1) of all instinctive sensations, hunger, thirst, sexual desire, and so on; and (2) of all automatic or semi-automatic movements—that is, movements that are not consciously controlled. We do not consciously control our legs in walking or our fingers in writing; if we attempted to do so we should walk or write extremely slowly and awkwardly as an infant does.²

One of the purposes of the extremely complicated exercises which are taught by Mr. Gurdjieff at Fontainebleau is to increase the efficiency and rapidity with which mental centre can control physical movements. But in general, moving centre works very much more quickly than mental centre; and emotional centre enormously more quickly than either of them.

Extraordinary mental and physical phenomena may generally—in this system of analysis—be ascribed to the momentary and more or less accidental use of emotional energy by one or other of the other two centres. The phenomena referred to are recognized by all psychologists, though explained by none. There is, for instance, the 'mathematical prodigy'—the child of six or seven, who can do in his head in a few seconds a fractional cube root which experienced adult mathematicians can work out only with the expenditure of much time and labour. (This prodigious faculty, it may be noted in passing, seems invariably to grow weaker, and to disappear about the age of puberty.) Then there are all the phenomena of 'clairvoyance', including telepathy and premonition. There are the phenomena of religious 'ecstasy', which, as that greatest of scientific psychologists, William James, has shown, can be paralleled by states of mind produced by the inhalation of nitrous oxide. There is the quite real phenomenon of a man having suddenly 'the strength of ten men'. And there is that strange mental phenomenon which frequently occurs when men are in a condition of extreme physical peril and when 'in a flash' they 'see their whole lives'. Less sensational, but of the same type, are those phenomena, of which perhaps most people have some experience, when for a second, or even for a few minutes, their minds work at an enormously greater speed than is usual. They see things 'in a flash', in a moment of 'inspiration'. A writer suddenly sees a whole book and could dictate it in ten minutes if he could only speak quickly enough; a politician is suddenly able to visualize simultaneously all the factors in a difficult situation; a mathematician suddenly 'sees' the key to an apparently insoluble differential equation; a portrait painter suddenly grasps the essential feature that he must paint; the business man of genius suddenly 'knows' what will happen to prices next week; the common or garden mortal suddenly grasps the full meaning of a maxim or a formula which he has heard all his life without understanding; James, after describing such phenomena, concluded that:

'normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence; but apply the requisite stimulus and at a touch they are there in all their completeness... No account of the universe can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded. How to regard them is the question.'

Nearly always such states of consciousness—of thought so clear and rapid as to be different in kind from ordinary thought—occur only by accident; but, as James recognized, they can sometimes be produced artificially (and illegitimately) by the use of drugs, alcohol, opium, nitrous oxide and especially haschisch. The general attitude of Mr. Ouspensky (as the writer understands it) towards such phenomena is that intrinsically they are not abnormal but normal, that they are accidental and elementary manifestations of faculties which are innate in all normal human beings, and that in general they result from the mental or physical use of 'emotional' energy, or at any rate of some form of energy 'higher' than that which is ordinarily available for mental or physical processes. Of such

energy there is not an infinite supply; its most valuable quality is that it can be expended with extreme rapidity, that it is released, so to speak, at a far higher potential than ordinary energy. The accumulation of months may be expended in a few minutes. It is therefore of the utmost importance to create it, to conserve it and consciously to direct its expenditure—and this is possible.

Normally we waste all forms of energy every minute of our lives, and that waste is bound to continue until we have learned to 'know ourselves'. We waste, for example, an immense amount of physical energy not merely in unnecessary movements—which is not very important—but by keeping muscles unnecessarily in tension; but failing, in other words, habitually to relax muscles which are not at the moment required. It is difficult to learn to relax, even when we are in an attitude of repose, and still more when we are doing physical work, and in the doing of it are using three times as many muscles as are really necessary. Only by long study and severe use is it possible to learn which muscle need be used for a given purpose and which need not; but until we know we cannot prevent a constant waste of energy.

Far more important is the constant waste of emotional energy. It is wasted, for example, in 'day-dreaming'. Day-dreams are the result as a rule of the idle and uncontrolled working of emotional centre and absorb, almost automatically, all our surplus of emotional energy. More still is wasted in 'negative' emotions—fear, irritation, anxiety, anger. Every one knows how exhausting continuous mental anxiety may be, but every one does not recognize that other negative emotions, though not often so continuous, are just as wasteful, and sometimes, while they last, much more rapidly wasteful. They involve an unnecessary emotional tension, analogous to, and usually accompanied by, unnecessary muscular tension. It is one of the first principles of the Gurdjieff-Ouspensky system that all negative emotions—in so far as they are mechanical and foolish, as they usually are—must be utterly suppressed. In a few minutes of irritation over the losing of a train, or the impertinence of an omnibus conductor, or the suffering of a personal slight, we may expend energy that would have written an article or sustained us through a Marathon race.

The method of suppressing negative emotion and in general preventing the waste of emotional energy is more difficult to explain than to understand. It is substantially expressed in the phrase: 'Never identify'. We all of us 'identify' to a greater or less extent; with persons, with causes, with interests, with emotions, and not unusually with fancy pictures of ourselves. Women very commonly 'identify' with their husbands or their children, feeling what they feel, or even more than they feel, vicariously and unnecessarily. Men more usually 'identify' with their ambitions or their pleasures.³ Thus they surrender the control of their own emotions. They are at the mercy of their tastes or of their friends or of their own vanity or even of the weather. They are infinitely vulnerable and every wound implies a waste of energy. One has toothache, and if one 'identifies' with it, all the world is coloured by toothache—with a prodigal expenditure of energy. But worst of all, perhaps, because it tends to be chronic, is 'identification' with an imaginary portrait of oneself—day-dreaming. In that charming pursuit one may waste every ounce of energy one possesses. If you have an hour to spend, let us say, on the top of an omnibus, it is far more economical to occupy your mind with a useless arithmetical problem than to allow your emotional imagination to wander. To stop 'imagination' even for a week—which is extremely difficult—brings an astonishing gain of what we usually call psychical

energy. And completely to stop 'identification', which is impossible, would bring us far more. If at all times we could see ourselves as other people see us, feel as little about ourselves as other people feel about us, and never (except deliberately) allow ourselves to be 'carried away' by our work or our pleasures or our dislikes or our more trivial interests, that would be complete 'non-identification', complete emotional relaxation. But obviously such a state is not easily to be attained. The results, however, of even partial 'non-identification', if the effort be constant, are interesting and surprising.

From the practical point of view it is very important also to break habits—without reference to whether they are good or bad habits. The object of this is not to strengthen the will, but to increase the range of conscious life. Normally we are asleep by day and every day, lulled to sleep by an unbroken succession of habitual activities and habitual surroundings; it is only in quite unusual circumstances (especially dangerous circumstances) that we become even partially conscious of ourselves. By deliberately breaking habits—even trivial habits such as performing the operations of our toilet in a particular order or holding a cigarette always in the left hand or smiling mechanically when we speak—we create slightly unusual circumstances for ourselves and increase the average intensity of our consciousness, noticing many things which we should not otherwise notice and learning a great deal about the machines we are. To break even a single habit is far more difficult than it sounds, but the results are directly proportionate to the difficulty and are usually much greater than one would expect. We all know that we are the slaves of habit, but only by personal experiment can we realize how habit controls almost everything and how utterly mechanical we are.

Constant experiments are necessary. If you find out nothing, then there is no reason to pursue the study of the Gurdjieff-Ouspensky system. But if, as is more probable, you do make discoveries, then you cannot stop, for you begin to understand. One of the fundamental ideas of the system is the difference between 'knowledge' and 'understanding'. It is a difference which most people recognize more or less consciously, but which again is not easy to define. It is suggested in the common phrase that so-and-so 'has learned everything and knows everything'. Knowledge alone is intrinsically barren and worthless. A man might know by heart every medical work that had ever been written, and yet be the worst doctor in the world. 'Understanding' is, as a mathematician might say, a function of knowledge, but it always includes a certain element of emotion. Knowledge becomes understanding only when it is felt; and until it is felt it is useless, even for strictly scientific purposes. Every great scientific discoverer possesses a specific faculty in addition to mere 'cleverness'; we may call it the 'creative faculty' or 'imagination' or 'intuition'; the name does not matter so long as we recognize the emotional element in it, the element which transmutes knowledge into understanding. This transmutation cannot be explained, it is an alchemy of the mind; but nearly every one can observe the process in himself and distinguish fairly accurately between knowledge that is purely mental and knowledge that has become, as it were, part of himself, and that, in the full sense of the word, he can use. In the language of Mr. Ouspensky, 'understanding' is the product of 'knowledge' and 'being'. 'Knowledge' belongs to mental centre alone; 'being' is the state of development, and correlation of all three centres. 'Knowledge' and 'being' together form as it were an explosive mixture which can produce 'understanding'—but only if there is some mechanism to provide a spark. 'Knowledge' may run ahead of 'being', and much more rarely 'being' may run ahead of 'knowledge'; but in either case real understanding is limited by the more backward element of the two. The writer has suggested that

as regards pure mathematics the West had progressed as far as, or further than, the East; but Mr. Gurdjieff would probably say that whilst that was true it was only half the truth, that the West knows far more mathematics than it can understand, that its 'knowledge' in this connection has gone far beyond its 'being', and therefore it cannot use more than a fraction of what it knows—which is certainly the case.

The general object of Mr. Gurdjieff's teaching and method is to develop all the innate faculties of the normal human being, so that the student may ultimately become capable of using all forms of consciousness. But such a state of 'full consciousness' is of course an ideal which few, if any, can hope to attain. The neophyte will not learn at Fontainebleau how to control the flow of his blood, as many a dancing Dervish can; nor how to produce the emotional 'ecstasy' which some monks of the West as well as of the East have learned to command; nor how to control the actual processes of his mind, with the facility of an Eastern yogi. But he may possibly learn something more comprehensive than any of these. The fakir, the monk and the yogi each develop a high degree of control of a single centre. Mr. Gurdjieff's pupils are given the opportunity of developing all three centres simultaneously. Mr. Ouspensky's psychological teaching is merely preparatory; and, except possibly in the case of certain psychological types which are extremely rare in the Western world, it cannot lead to very substantial results, unless it is followed by a more or less prolonged training at the Fontainebleau school—the full title of which is the 'Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man'. It is an unprepossessing title, but it is hard to think of a better one.

This article is a very inadequate description even of the little that the writer has grasped of the Gurdjieff-Ouspensky teaching and *a fortiori*, of course, of the teaching itself. The necessity for extreme condensation has compelled the omission of vital definitions, and sometimes the use of inaccurate language. Curious or captious readers must await the authoritative exposition of the system by Mr. Ouspensky which is shortly to appear in book form. Meanwhile the present writer's object is not to give a full explanation of the system, still less to defend it; but merely to indicate its general features for the sake of those who may be inclined to investigate its possibilities for themselves.

Notes

¹ In some, after the great difficulties of entrance had been overcome, an apprenticeship of several years was necessary, before any real knowledge could be given or taken.

² Some people can write rapidly with their left hands at the first attempt, and recognizably in their own handwriting; but, of course, backwards. If one can keep mental centre from interfering, moving centre will direct the muscles of the left hand only a little less efficiently than it directs those of the right hand. The directive control, that is to say, rests not in the muscles, nor what we ordinarily call 'consciousness' but somewhere else. That somewhere else is what is meant by moving centre.

³ People who study this system with enthusiasm often 'identify' very deeply for a time with the system itself—or with the teacher!

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Gurdjieff Heads the Newest Cult

Which Harks Back to Ancient Days

by Raymond G. Carroll

[First published in the *New York Evening Post*, January 26, 1924, p. 12. Raymond Carroll provides a journalist's jaunty account of "Gurdjieffers," the "weird and fantastic Gurdjieff cult" which had just arrived in the U.S. for the first time. Despite Carroll's limited understanding of Gurdjieff and the movements demonstration he witnessed, his article contains several vivid observations that are not available elsewhere.]

All His Followers Turn Over Their Worldly Goods to "The Master" to Be Used For Further Propagation Of Strange Faith

A NEW CULT has come to town. Really it is a very old cult, for it scurries down through the centuries to us from pagan times. Like all cults it has a "Master"—Gurdjieff, a former Greek antique collector who lived in Moscow but who spent years studying the pagan harmonic rhythms, the gymnastics of esoteric schools, sacred temple dances and ceremonies, the ritual movements of monks, dervishes, shamans, and fakirs of the various religious ceremonies.

You pronounce his name "Gurr-jeff." He is here among us—a medium-sized man of powerful black eyes with a black mustache which rides his upper lip like a whipstock. His head is shaved, after the fashion of a Brahmin. None other—yes, he is the famous Gurdjieff of the [Gurdjieff Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man](#), which is permanently located in the outskirts of the historic town of Fountainbleau, thirty-seven miles southeast of Paris....

[The complete text is available in the [printed copy](#) of this issue.]

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

On Man's Place in the Scheme of Things Between the Planets and the Moon

by **Bernard Metz**

[This review of P. D. Ouspensky's, [In Search of the Miraculous](#), was first published in *The Christian Register*, Boston, Vol. CXXIX (1), January 1950. Bernard Metz was one of Gurdjieff's translators and personal secretaries at the Prieuré for about a decade. Recalling the essential questions of human existence, he describes Gurdjieff's approach to these questions and conveys a sense of the tremendous scale and range of subjects surveyed by Gurdjieff.]

Who has not at moments of "awakening" stopped to ponder on the meaning and purpose of existence; of this inescapable round of little pleasure, much pain and more monotony to be ended only by death; of working to have the means to eat and eating to have the strength to work; of laboring to rebuild what we destroy and destroying what we rebuild?...

[The complete text is available in the [printed copy](#) of this issue.]

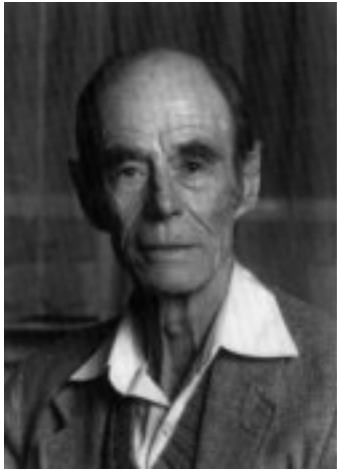
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Exchanges Within

Questions from Everyday Life

...

Commentary by [Dennis Lewis](#)

[A review of John Pentland's [Exchanges Within: Questions from Everyday Life Selected from Gurdjieff Group Meetings with John Pentland in California 1955–1984.](#)

First published in Inner Alchemy, San Francisco, Vol. I (2), Fall 1997, p. 7.]

Those of us searching for the truth have no doubt come to see that we live our lives at a very low level of consciousness and that we lie to ourselves and others about who we are and what we understand. We have also no doubt come to see that in order to experience the truth, we must first see how deeply we resist it. We can see this resistance, for example, in the way we prefer answers to questions, or the way we constantly recoil from uncertainty and the unknown. We can also see it in the way we manipulate in accordance with our self-image the great ideas that could help motivate and guide our search—ideas related to self-knowledge, self-development, unity, freedom, pure love, levels of being and consciousness, and so on. It does not matter what teaching we follow; we are all slaves to this manipulation.

According to the great spiritual pathfinder G. I. Gurdjieff, the first step toward experiencing the truth is to see that most of the time I'm not really interested in it. It is to see that I live my life in sleep, and that to fulfill my destiny as a "three-brained being" on this earth I must wake up. The inner and outer work needed to awaken requires the help of a real teacher, as well as of a community of other serious seekers trying to work together on behalf of the truth.

One such outstanding teacher was [Lord John Pentland](#). Until his death in 1984, Lord Pentland, who served as the president of the Gurdjieff Foundation of New York and founded the Gurdjieff Foundation of California, directed the work activities of hundreds of people throughout the United States who came to the Gurdjieff Work "in search of truth." *Exchanges Within* is the record of some of the many questions that arose in relation to this search, as well as of Lord Pentland's "answers." The book shows his remarkable ability to *translate* Gurdjieff's teachings into the exact language

needed to help each seeker experience herself or himself as a living question in the face of the unknown. It is through this experience that awakening can begin.

What is the work that supports awakening? *Exchanges Within* probes this question on every page. Through responses such as the following one, Lord Pentland shows us that awakening requires the help not only of real ideas, but also of a deep work with attention, sensation, and energy: "The movement of consciousness is magic. Life is magic, would you agree? ... You can't understand life, it is the miraculous... The point is, this magic is going on now and in order to experience it I have to have a very open muscle structure, an attention that contains all my energy..."

Readers who are willing to turn toward their own deepest questions, especially the question "Who am I?", will find valuable guidance for their search in these unparalleled, deep-reaching exchanges.

[Dennis Lewis is author of *The Tao of Natural Breathing* and editor of Inner Alchemy. He is also founder of [Mountain Wind](#), an organization dedicated to natural breathing, Taoism, Gurdjieff, Chi Kung, meditation, and self-transformation.]

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Featured: [Summer 1998 Issue, Vol. I \(4\)](#)

Revision: May 1, 2000



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Discussion on "Good and Evil"

with [A. R. Orage](#)

November 12th [1927] — Part 2 of 3

Orage: We will continue with Good and Evil in order to try to reach firmer conclusions than we arrived at last week. Our present views are wholly subjective; tell me your family income for two generations, the schools you have gone to and so on and I will tell you your real ideas on good and evil. Does there exist in the objective world any element corresponding to our subjective good or evil? It's too bad that the stimulation of these evenings so often fades leaving nothing. First let's have questions.

Alan Brown: I remember once we were given three stages of morals, and eventually right and wrong. These weren't mentioned last week except when it was said that until we have objective conscience we have no sense of good and evil, but only of right and wrong, as though these latter were lower states. It seemed to me that much of our discussion was of right and wrong.

Orage: Right and wrong are subject to pragmatic proof.

Brown: But in seeking for an absolute, can't we say that pragmatic judgment may come from objective understanding?

Orage: Oh no. Any result in a world that is perpetually becoming may depend on where you draw your line and say that at that point something is right or wrong; but later on this judgment may be reversed. The only center in which absolute judgments are possible is the one where we feel our absolute identity—in the emotional center. Instinctive judgments are based on like and dislike; the intellect says right or wrong. They are both based on the absolute center—the emotional. This says if the thing is good or evil....

[The complete text is available in the [printed copy](#) of this issue.]

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Gurdjieff

International Review

Fall 1998 Issue, Vol. II No. 1

Special Issue on the Gurdjieff Literature

Editorial Introduction

Thousands of books, articles, reviews and comments (mostly in English and French) have been published about Gurdjieff, his ideas and his teaching. This issue examines the nature and significance of this literature.

Gurdjieff: The Man and the Literature

Gurdjieff's biographer James Moore provides a sensitive and discerning guide to Gurdjieff's life and the classics of the Gurdjieff literature in English. This essay was originally published in *Resurgence* No. 96, January–February 1983 (Bideford, England) and is reproduced with the kind permission of the editor, Satish Kumar, and of the author.

GURDJIEFF: An Annotated Bibliography a review by Andrew Rawlinson

[Sample Only]

A review by Andrew Rawlinson of [*Gurdjieff: An Annotated Bibliography*](#) by J. Walter Driscoll and The Gurdjieff Foundation of California (1985) New York: Garland Publishing. First published in *Religion Today: a journal of contemporary religions* (1987) London, this slightly revised version is issued here with the author's kind permission. Although Driscoll's



A handwritten signature of Gurdjieff in cursive script, written in black ink on a white background.

"...in Beelzebub, I know, there is everything one must know. It is a very interesting book. Everything is there. All that exists, all that has existed, all that can exist. The beginning, the end, all the secrets of the creation of the world; all is there."

G. I. Gurdjieff

"Beelzebub's point of view is based on first-hand experience, yet expressed through an evolutionary and spatial distance so that, although what we recognize in his narrative is ourselves, we come to view ourselves as something familiar yet alien, understandable yet strange, observing ourselves from close up and from afar in one and the same glance."

bibliography went out of print in 1994, we include this review because of Rawlinson's astute and helpful analysis of the Gurdjieff literature.

[The Tales Themselves: An Overview](#)

[Sample Only]

The first of three installments, this revised Fourth Chapter of Dr. Anna Challenger's Ph.D. dissertation from Kent State University (1990) is reproduced with the author's kind permission and provides a glimpse of the deeply considered understanding each of us must find in our own reading of *Beelzebub's Tales*.

[The Disenchantment of the Dragon](#)

[Sample Only]

An inspiring essay by Martha Heyneman that links the symbolic structures of the Arthurian legend cycle and mythic elements underlying *Beelzebub's Tales* to reveal the necessity of transforming rather than slaying the Dragon. This essay was originally published in *A Journal of Our Time* No. 2, 1979 (Toronto) and is reproduced with the kind permission of the author and of the publisher Bob McWhinney.

[On Attention and Understanding of Beelzebub's Tales](#)

An excerpt of a talk taken from an unpublished, undated typescript in which Gurdjieff comments briefly on the relationship between attention and understanding when reading *Beelzebub's Tales*.

[Beelzebub's Tales: Fifty Years Later](#)

[Sample Only]

Denis Saurat visited the Prieuré for a weekend in February 1923 and published a skeptical account in his essay, [A Visit to Gourdyev](#). Saurat later revised his opinion of Gurdjieff and his teaching and came to recognize *Beelzebub's Tales* as a major

Anna Challenger

"Reason may sometimes govern our thoughts, but our emotions, which animate our actions, listen, not to logic, but to myth."

Martha Heyneman

"If you have not by nature a critical mind your staying here is useless."

G. I. Gurdjieff

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October 1, 1998

work. Written shortly after its publication in 1950, and, as timely today as it was then, Saurat comments on what he regards as the book's central themes and speculates about its long term impact.

Facts, Fictions & Speculations

[Sample Only]

A review by J. Walter Driscoll of *An Introduction to Gurdjieff's Beelzebub: a Modern Sufi Teaching Tale*, by Anna Challenger (from which we are pleased to present Chapter Four in this issue) and *Metanoia: Beyond the Mind We Go*, a novel by Len Maurice. Challenger and Maurice have written the first books to focus on *Beelzebub's Tales* since A. R. Orage's *Commentaries* (1961) and J. G. Bennett's *Talks* (1977).

Other New Features

Henriette H. Lannes

An original sketch by James Moore. "That the Work in England is today so firmly established is preponderantly owed to one woman. Active in London for nearly three decades; coping with all the difficulties of exile and a foreign language; subsuming the powerful resistance which any powerful affirmation lawfully evokes — this remarkable human being guaranteed here the Work's ethos, dynamic, and trajectory. Her name was Henriette Lannes."

Good and Evil: Nov 19

[Sample Only]

The final installment of a three-part round-table discussion of Gurdjieff's ideas and themes from *Beelzebub's Tales* led by Orage in November of 1927.

Are We Awake?

An essay by A. R. Orage first published in a series of articles titled "Fifteen Exercises in Practical Psychology" in *Psychology Magazine* (New York) between April 1925 and January 1926.

Orage examines sleep and waking as a psycho-spiritual metaphor. He concludes, "To be aware that we are asleep is to be on the point of waking; and to be aware that we are only partially awake is the first condition of becoming and making ourselves more fully awake."



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Gurdjieff

The Man and the Literature

by James Moore

**"I have very good leather to sell
to those who want to make
themselves shoes."**

G. I. Gurdjieff

Who was George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff? Writer? Choreographer? Psychiatrist? Musician? Doctor? Master Cook? He defies categorisation: though it is clear that he re-united segments of 'acroamatic' knowledge gleaned during a twenty year search in Asia; and brought to the West a methodology for the possible evolution of consciousness, within a cosmology of awe-inspiring scale. His call was radical. Awake! Awake from your unsuspected hypnotic sleep, to consciousness and conscience.

More than a hundred years ago Gurdjieff was a poor boy in the obscure town of Kars, on the Russo-Turkish frontier: today his name is becoming a modish verbal token, which (like Darwin, Marx, Freud, Einstein) is absurdly conceived to be self-explicatory. Those who would now narrowly appropriate him as 'the inspirer of the ecology movement' or 'the initiator of contemporary eupsychian therapies' — though doubtless they glimpse aspects — comprehend neither his scale nor the trajectory of the religious traditions.

For a truer perspective on Gurdjieff we must turn to his circle of devoted followers, who paid for their insights by effort. These were men and women magnetised not by a system of self-supportive notional abstractions but by a human being of Rabelaisian stature; by the fine energies at his disposition; by his compassion; and by his ability to transmit a *pratique*. Their journals and autobiographies constitute a rich and singular literature: Gurdjieff is assigned his inescapable historicity, yet somehow struggles free, emerging with the cohesion and the presence of a myth.

Encounters with Gurdjieff

No definitive biography of Gurdjieff exists or is remotely in prospect.¹ He was born in Alexandropol c.1866, and first appears on a well-lit stage in 1912 in Moscow. To encounter him was always a test: the first meeting — certainly for those who became his disciples — was the axis on which a whole life turned; then in succeeding years, a human being with all his inherent frailty would answer, more or less truly, to Gurdjieff's insistent demand. There lay the drama. As for us, we can only live here and now; and yet to the degree that we enter into the pupils' experience by an inner act of compassion, their memoirs hold a value above the purely historical.

The composer [Thomas de Hartmann](#) (1886–1956) and his wife Olga were Gurdjieff's intimate disciples and companions for twelve years, and it is thanks to him that Gurdjieff's music has reached us. In *Our Life with Mr. Gurdjieff* they share with us the journey they shared with him: from Petrograd, seized by crisis in 1917, across the Caucasus mountains to Tiflis, finally reaching Paris in 1922. Simplicity sometimes approaching *naïveté*, characterises their writing, but the impression of Gurdjieff is only the more striking. We find him moving impartially, almost invisibly, through scenes of confusion and fratricidal turmoil; welcoming each difficulty and danger as a new opportunity for practical teaching.

In October 1922 Gurdjieff took the Prieuré at Fontainebleau-Avon, a chateau in the grounds of 200 acres; here he rapidly created conditions for self-study, unprecedented in Europe. Gurdjieff had a special rapport with his pupils' children, caring for their education in the word's real sense. Sometimes he challenged them; sometimes he led them with great delicacy towards a vital insight; always his teaching had an element of surprise and the hallmark of practicality. From eleven to fifteen Fritz Peters (1913–1980) lived at the Prieuré, and in *Boyhood with Gurdjieff* his fresh and at times uproariously funny memoir, he relives that special experience.

In spring 1924, Gurdjieff visited the USA with prepared pupils, to give public demonstrations of his sacred dances; and their influence upon key intellectuals was far-reaching. The dances also spoke categorically to the young Englishman Stanley Nott (1887–1978) who had a different, simpler background: who had travelled the world working hard at many trades, and whose feelings had been enervated by his sufferings in the trenches. 'Here,' wrote Nott, 'is what I went to the ends of the earth to find.' His allegiance to Gurdjieff proved life-long and undivided; he spent many summers at the Prieuré, and in *Teachings of Gurdjieff* conveys both his inner and outer experience with Boswellian vigor. He incorporates in full the penetrating (though not definitive) commentary on Gurdjieff's book *Beelzebub* by his friend [A. R. Orage](#).

The decade 1925 to 1935 Gurdjieff devoted to his writing, achieved in the distracting conditions of the Café de Paix. Here, in spring 1932, he was encountered by the American authoress [Kathryn Hulme](#) (1900–1981) later to attain fame with her novel *The Nun's Story*; she hungered to become his personal pupil, but nearly four years passed before her persistence was rewarded. Her autobiography *Undiscovered Country* richly evokes her experience in a special group of four women (all sophisticated, avant-garde and single — and some frankly Lesbian) which met daily in Gurdjieff's flat in Rue Labie. At its worst the style is cloying: at its best vibrant. Gurdjieff's humanity and

capacity to work with diverse types is strongly conveyed, as is the group's emotional commitment to each other and their teacher. They named their small company '[The Rope](#)' in order never to forget their interdependence in ascent.

Urged to flee Paris before the Germans entered in 1940, Gurdjieff chose to remain in his modest flat at 6 Rue des Colonels-Rénard. Though well into his seventies, he was unsparing of his energies: giving individual counselling; teaching a new series of dances or Movements at the Salle Pleyel; and somehow maintaining in those sparse times the patriarchal hospitality of his audacious feasts. French interest in Gurdjieff — formerly slight — now burgeoned, drawing many intellectuals to him, among them René Zuber (1902–1979) the film director. His slim volume *Who Are You Monsieur Gurdjieff?* is a calm and fastidious meditation: confronted with the enigma of Gurdjieff and deeply concerned to situate him in relation to Christianity, Zuber is repeatedly brought back to question himself.

Fifteen months before Gurdjieff's death, [J. G. Bennett](#) (1897–1974) who had briefly met him in the 1920s, established a more serious — though necessarily intermittent — contact.² Elizabeth Mayall (1918–1991) later to become Bennett's wife, was free to live in Paris from January 1949, and thus shared more fully in the unique world of Rue des Colonels-Rénard. Here at Gurdjieff's last suppers, his mysterious ritual the 'Toast of the Idiots' served as the vehicle of a final and intensely individual teaching. *Idiots in Paris*, the Bennetts' raw unedited diaries, captures with almost painful honesty and immediacy the last hundred days of Gurdjieff's life, and his pupils' poignant struggle for understanding. Gurdjieff died at Neuilly on 29 October 1949.

The Teaching

Then what precisely was Gurdjieff's Teaching? Although the question seems to promise clarification, it is spoilt by its very rigour: time deadens authorised versions like hemlock, and Gurdjieff never issued one. 'I teach,' he said gnomically, 'that when it rains, the pavements get wet.' The vivifying power of his ideas entails the moment, the circumstance, the type and state of the pupil. His one constant demand is *Know thyself*, to which he adduces a metaphysic, a metapsychology and a metachemistry which absolutely defy précis; a human typology, a phenomenology of consciousness, and a quasi-mathematical scale linking macrocosm and microcosm. This complex apparatus is illuminated by one master-idea: that Man is called to strive for self-perfection, in service to our sacred living Universe.

Can we catch echoes of Pythagoras or Plato, Christ or Milarepa; see certain limited parallels with moderns like Mendeleev, Sheldon, Vernadsky, Watson? It is easy to lose oneself and one's search in a labyrinth of comparisons, and in the phylogeny of ideas. Gurdjieff himself was not content with words; his Movements and sacred dances were at once a glyph of universal laws and a field for individual search. When, approaching sixty, he turned to writing, his productions were heuristic rather than expository, and their form totally unexpected: first a cosmological epic of a special kind, then an autobiography of a special kind.

Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson is Gurdjieff's masterpiece and no other book brings us closer to him. Readers who can rise to the double challenge of its profundity and its quite deliberate stylistic difficulty; who can summon again and again the necessary fine attention — will find encoded here all Gurdjieff's psychological and cosmological ideas, and a fundamental critique.

On a long journey by spaceship, Beelzebub good-humouredly conveys his understanding of 'All and Everything' to his grandson Hasein. Through his impartial compassionate eyes we see life on earth as from a great distance, with microscopic clarity. Down millenia and across continents, we see Man deeply asleep, blindly and aimlessly struggling and suffering, torn by war and passion, fouling everything he touches; and yet, through a strange flaw in his nature, clinging ingeniously to the very instruments which wound, the patterns which betray.

A stark picture? Undeniably. And in other hands than Gurdjieff's it might have been cruelly nihilistic; but Gurdjieff is calling us to life. It is his genius to float an objective hope, like an Ark on these dark waters. He bequeaths us the great figure of Beelzebub, whose presence indicates man as he might be: aware with gratitude of the divine spark within him, and striving by conscious labours towards the fulfilment of his true place in the cosmic scheme.

In his next book *Meetings with Remarkable Men* Gurdjieff evokes the first and least known period of his own life; his boyhood in Kars under the benign influence of his father and his first tutor Dean Borsh; then his early manhood dedicated, in many guises, to an unremitting search for a real and universal knowledge. His language is spare and vivid, unrolling the lands of Transcaucasia and Central Asia before us, even while he hints at a parallel geography of Man's psyche, and the route he followed to penetrate it.

We journey to the interior in company with the friends of Gurdjieff's youth — princes, engineers, doctors, priests — men remarkable not from their surface arrangements but by their resourcefulness, self-restraint and compassion. We see them as though face to face; their words are lodged in us as though spoken directly in a moment of intimate quietness.

So Gurdjieff, having swept the ground clear with the awesome critique *Beelzebub*, offers us now his material for a new creation — nothing other than our hard diurnal life, but thrust into question and placed at the service of an aim, which, by its intelligence and elevation, is truly human.

Between the years 1915 and 1918, Gurdjieff liberally gave to his Russian groups an astonishing body of exact data, which had cost twenty years to search out. Prominent among his pupils at this time was Piotr Demianovich Ouspensky (1878–1947) journalist, mathematician and intellectual; already famous for his book *Tertium Organum*. The very epoch, with its mass destruction and savage contradictions, sharpened Ouspensky's lifelong hunger for values and knowledge of a different order.

In Search of the Miraculous was published posthumously; it consists, for three parts out of four, of Gurdjieff's own words, preserved from those days and brilliantly arranged. Endorsed by Gurdjieff himself, this work undoubtedly offers the most accessible account of his psychological and

cosmological ideas, while carrying us as near as any book alone can, to the special conditions of a group. The overwhelming sense of shock, excitement and revelation which fired Ouspensky in 1915, will be transmitted through these sentences and diagrams to people of every generation, who (whatever the external conditions with which they must blend) are secretly in search.

[Jeanne de Salzmann](#) became Gurdjieff's pupil in Tiflis in 1919, and through thirty years participated in each succeeding dispensation of his Work, even carrying responsibility for his groups during the last ten years of his life. *In Views from the Real World* she has collated more than forty important talks given by Gurdjieff between 1917 and 1930. We owe their very preservation to the educated memories of his followers, who were forbidden to take verbatim notes. If these are not Gurdjieff's words in every syllable, it is clearly his authentic voice, issuing his unmistakable challenge.

Approaches to Gurdjieff

No-one — whether he responds to Gurdjieff or reacts against him — can measure the voltage of his intellect without receiving a certain shock. His is one of those few effectual voices, which, 'passing through a great diversity of echoes, keeps its own resonance and its power of action'.³ Then let us briefly hear some precis, 'approaches', thematic and lyrical restatements — recognising them for reverberations, yet acknowledging their profound legitimacy in a living tradition, confided to living men.

After four years as one of Gurdjieff's close pupils, P. D. Ouspensky expounded his ideas in England and America for a quarter of a century. *In The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution*, he distils from Gurdjieff's integrated Teaching its psychological essence, presenting it without flavour or aroma in only 92 pages. This formulation, based on Ouspensky's lecture notes, is so lucid and balanced that it bids to remain forever unmatched as an introduction and an *aide-memoire*.

The feeling of a pupil's actual experience — palpably missing from Ouspensky's summary of theory — is supplied in *Venture with Ideas* by Kenneth Walker (1882–1966). This warm human memoir lightly sketches Gurdjieff's psychological and cosmological teaching, within the biographical context of the author's twenty four years study with Ouspensky in England. Walker's scientific background (he was three times Hunterian Professor of Surgery at the Royal College of Surgeons) adds interest to his reception of esoteric ideas.

Men are tragically divided, but all who wish may share the primordial existential questions: who am I, and what is the significance and aim of human life? The great edifice of Gurdjieff's Teaching rests on the unshakable foundation of this innocent interrogation. The theme is calmly developed in *Toward Awakening* by Jean Vaysse (1917–1975) a pioneer of open-heart surgery and transplantation, and a close pupil of Gurdjieff in Paris. His final chapter outlines for the first time, Gurdjieffian exercises linking attention with bodily sensation.

The mountain, rooted in the earth, its summit reaching towards heaven, is an ancient symbol of man's

aspirations and strivings. René Daumal (1908–1944) who studied under Gurdjieff in Paris during the war, wrote his subtle and humorous allegory *Mount Analogue* in the language of a poet and mountaineer, to remind us of the strange inner ascent to which we are called. Although he died young, his own work sustains its impact on modern French literature.

Coming years must inevitably heighten scholarly interest in Gurdjieff. Because his Teaching is experiential; because there is danger of confusing levels; because an academic with a fundamental misapprehension or even bias, can embroider it so prettily — the prospect is not wholly welcome.⁴ And yet some auguries are good; Michel Waldberg in *Gurdjieff: An Approach to His Ideas* draws intelligently on all major texts, contriving a work of popular synthesis and commentary which sets a real standard.

And Now?

Gurdjieff preferred Today over Yesterday; he did not invite us either to anatomise him or to idolise him, but to search for ourselves. Returning again and again to *Beelzebub*, we seem to catch the author's rich human voice projected toward his 'Grandsons' — pupils of the New Age; rising generations who could not meet him, but who bear the seeds of his ideas into the unknown future. And yet no pilgrimage of reading is sufficient: no book, not even a sacred book, can furnish that unfathomable moment when, in the actual presence of his teacher, the pupil's understanding is amplified and deepened.

Then where to look today? All a man's flair, discrimination and downright commonsense are solicited here, for there are many siren voices and self-advertisements. And yet it was not for nothing that Gurdjieff prepared pupils; not for nothing that he gave indications for the future. And after his death, it was not for nothing that the cherished Movements have been progressed through decades; and a responsible nucleus painfully formed, to maintain the current that had been created.

Where then?⁵ For those whose approach to Gurdjieff is practical, this is the question which must prevail. There is first an outer contact to be found: then an inner contact to be renewed and deepened.

Gurdjieff; a select bibliography ⁶

The Teaching

[*Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*](#) by G. I. Gurdjieff (1950)

[*Meetings with Remarkable Men*](#) by G. I. Gurdjieff (1963)

[*In Search of the Miraculous*](#) by P. D. Ouspensky (1949)

[*Views from the Real World*](#) Talks of G. I. Gurdjieff (1973)

Approaches to Gurdjieff

[*The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution*](#) by P. D. Ouspensky (1978)

[*Venture with Ideas*](#) by Kenneth Walker (1951)

[*Toward Awakening*](#) by Jean Vaysse (1980)

[*Mount Analogue*](#) by René Daumal (1974)

[*Gurdjieff: An Approach to His Ideas*](#) by Michel Waldberg (1981)

Encounters with Gurdjieff

[*Our Life with Mr. Gurdjieff*](#) by Thomas and Olga de Hartmann (1964, Revised 1983 and 1992)

[*Boyhood with Gurdjieff*](#) by Fritz Peters (1964)

[*Teachings of Gurdjieff*](#) by C. S. Nott (1961)

[*Undiscovered Country*](#) by Kathryn Hulme (1966)

[*Who Are You Monsieur Gurdjieff?*](#) by René Zuber (1980)

[*Idiots in Paris*](#) by J. G. and E. Bennett (1980)

Notes

1. Attention is however invited to James Moore's subsequent biography [*Gurdjieff: the Anatomy of a Myth*](#) (Element Books Ltd., 1991).
2. One cannot know how much J. G. Bennett received from Gurdjieff; but the prolixity of his authorship contrasts wryly with the brevity of his actual contact. Nor does the breathtaking catholicity of his subsequent eclecticism suggest a particular or persevering commitment to Gurdjieff's Teaching.
3. Jeanne de Salzman Foreword (p. viii) to *Views from the Real World*.
4. A knowledge of Whitall N. Perry's intellectual affiliations with the school of Frithjof Schuon and René Guenon is helpful in situating his 1978 critique *Gurdjieff in the Light of Tradition*: the unrepresentative quotations, plucked from context and orchestrated with curious animus, mark it as polemical. James Webb undertook fundamental research, largely neglected by Perry, but his vast and more balanced work *The Harmonious Circle* (1980) is marred by indulgent speculation.
5. James Moore is personally prepared to advise readers seeking a suitable group in England (but wishes to emphasise that he cannot help with American or other international enquiries). Mr. Moore's e-mail address is: gsg@mistral.co.uk
6. Scholars embarked on in-depth Gurdjieff studies are wholeheartedly referred to [*Gurdjieff: an annotated bibliography*](#) by J. Walter Driscoll and the Gurdjieff Foundation of California (New York: Garland Publishing, 1985).

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James Moore is founder of the [Gurdjieff Studies Group](#), a small London (UK) centred group practising Gurdjieff's teaching on traditional lines.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

GURDJIEFF ***An Annotated Bibliography***

a review by Andrew Rawlinson

Gurdjieff must be the perfect subject for a bibliography. Although he lived and taught in France for nearly 30 years and visited America several times, the only writings of his which appeared in his lifetime were a typescript of [Beelzebub's Tales](#) in 1930 and *The Herald of Coming Good*, which was privately printed in 1933 and withdrawn a year later. Yet hundreds of people met him and were influenced by him, and dozens of these tried to follow the 'Way' that he taught. In addition, the most influential disseminator of Gurdjieff's ideas, Ouspensky, was nearly as reluctant to publish as his teacher. The situation is further complicated by the fact that Ouspensky taught in London independently of Gurdjieff. And, those of Gurdjieff's pupils like Orage, Nicoll and Bennett, who went on to lead groups and write, often published in obscure journals or with very small publishing houses. In short, Gurdjieff's extensive and complex ideas appeared in print piecemeal, here and there and everywhere, over a period of several decades and from very varied sources....

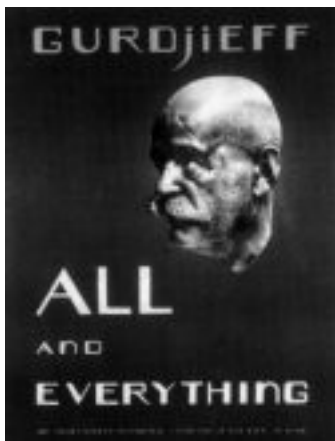
[The complete text is available in the [printed copy](#) of this issue.]

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

The *Tales* Themselves

An Overview

by [Dr. Anna Challenger](#)

**"The secret must be kept from all non-people;
the mystery must be hidden from all idiots."**

Omar Khayyam
11th c. Sufi poet

In John Bennett's *Talks on Beelzebub's Tales*, he recalls one night spent in Gurdjieff's Paris apartment shortly before the latter's death. There was a typical gathering of students: among them English, Americans, French, Greeks—more than fifty people assembled in a small apartment to have dinner with Gurdjieff and to listen to him speak. Gurdjieff offered a toast which in its simplicity seemed forceful: "Everyone must have an aim. If you have not an aim, you are not a man. I will tell you a very simple aim, *to die an honorable death*. Everyone can take this aim without any philosophizing—*not to perish like a dog*."¹ "As always," Bennett recalls, "he suddenly turns the conversation to a joke and in a minute the room is shaken with laughter at some story about the peculiarities of the English. But the impression remains of the overwhelming seriousness of our human situation, of the choice which confronts us between life and death."²

What seems simple, not to perish like a dog, is for Gurdjieff the most difficult aim a person can have. And making us aware of the choice between life and death, or between kinds and qualities of death, is a main concern of *Beelzebub's Tales*. In the *Tales*, however, the choice is presented in far more complex terms: we can either live our lives and die our deaths passively and mechanically, for the sole purpose of unconsciously supplying the Cosmos with required energies, whereby upon death we sacrifice our individuality; alternatively, we can live in such a way as to supply required Cosmic energies consciously, and of sufficient quantity and quality, so that death carries the potential of amounting to more than a payment of transformed energy, and we gain the possibility of becoming "immortal within the limits of the Solar System."³ The choice between life and death as expressed in these terms is related to Gurdjieff's Theory of Reciprocal Maintenance, which embodies his answer to the question, "What is the meaning and purpose of life on Earth, and in particular of human life?"

Like all organic life on Earth, human beings are apparatuses for transforming energies which are required for some other purpose. However, as a more complicated type of transforming apparatus than plants or animals, human beings possess some choice regarding how to supply the energies required by their existence. They can transform energy consciously or unconsciously, in greater or lesser quantities, and of varying qualities, thereby influencing the purpose and outcome of their deaths. These are among the choices of which Gurdjieff wants to make us aware in his *Tales*....

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

The Disenchantment of the Dragon

by Martha Heyneman

*Myths are not distorted records of historical events. They are not periphrastic descriptions of natural phenomena or 'explanations' of them; so far from that, events are demonstrations of the myths.*¹

For a long time in the Western World, the predominant form of the eternal fairy-tale has been the one wherein the Hero, in order to rescue the Princess and win the Kingdom, must slay the Dragon. This pattern is engraved upon the very substance of our psyche. It is re-enacted nightly on the screen in the costumes of the old west, the modern city or the fantasized future in outer space. In recent years, reflecting the revolution of the 1960's, the roles are often reversed: he who formerly played the Dragon (the 'bad guy') may take the role of the Hero. But the pattern remains the same. The Dragon, which in ancient China was the splendid embodiment of the energies of Nature, and held in its claws the Pearl of Great Price, became in Christian folklore, the Old Dragon, the Devil, the Enemy; and in our innumerable wars, the enemy, whoever he happened to be, became, for the moment, the Devil. Ascetic monk and puritan assumed the same militant posture toward their own lower natures, and Victorian character-building consisted of subduing the natural appetites and impulses by force—which is how 'will power' was, and still is, understood. The portrait of the Hero which is woven into the tapestry of our collective unconscious is never far from the red threads of the blood of the dying Dragon. Mastery to us means murder.

But the Dragon in ourselves is not slain. Energy can neither be created nor destroyed, but only transformed. Having lost the secret of its transformation, we do the Dragon's will whether we know it or not. When we suppose we have slain or conquered it, we have only pushed it out of our own sight, repressed it into the unconscious. Thus a part of our energy becomes inaccessible, and we are left sweet and ineffectual, or dry and rigid; or the Dragon in its underground prison takes on poisonous forms, making us physically ill, or enslaving us in irrational, repetitive patterns of action; or it erupts periodically in violent revolutions; or its image is projected upon our supposed external enemies. We have the choice of neurosis or psychosis....

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On Attention and Understanding of *Beelzebub's Tales*

by G. I. Gurdjieff

Question: Sir, I asked you last Thursday, if there was a way to develop attention; you said that attention was measured in the degree that one remembers oneself. You told me to especially look into myself. I especially asked you that because I wasn't able to put my attention on the reading of *Beelzebub*. During this week I understood that attention was what I was. As many "I's" as there were, so many different attentions. I wanted to ask you if there was, for developing attention, only the method of "I am" or if there are other special methods?

Gurdjieff: One thing I can tell you. Methods do not exist. I do not know any. But I can explain now everything simply. For example, in *Beelzebub*, I know, there is everything one must know. It is a very interesting book. Everything is there. All that exists, all that has existed, all that can exist. The beginning, the end, all the secrets of the creation of the world; all is there. But one must understand, and to understand depends on one's individuality. The more man has been instructed in a certain way, the more he can see. Subjectively, everyone is able to understand according to the level he occupies, for it is an objective book, and everyone should understand something in it. One person understands one part, another a thousand times more. Now, find a way to put your attention on understanding **all** of *Beelzebub*. This will be your task, and it is a good way to fix a real attention. If you can put real attention on *Beelzebub*, you can have a real attention in life. You didn't know this secret. In *Beelzebub* there is everything, I have said it, even how to make an omelet. Among other things, it is explained; and at the same time there isn't a word in *Beelzebub* about cooking. So, you put your attention on *Beelzebub*, another attention than that to which you are accustomed, and you will be able to have the same attention in life.

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Beelzebub's Tales

Fifty Years Later

Commentary by Denis Saurat

[An excerpt from C. S. Nott's [Journey Through This World: the second journal of a pupil](#) (subsequently titled *Further Teachings of Gurdjieff*). Nott recounts how he started a modestly successful publishing business and reproduces Denis Saurat's comments about *Beelzebub's Tales*.]

I published Denis Saurat's *Three Conventions*, which brought about a close friendship. He had met Gurdjieff at the Prieuré at Orage's suggestion and had been profoundly impressed. Saurat, a son of peasants, had a deep understanding of the rich current of life that, flowing under the glittering exterior, has almost nothing in common with this exterior—I mean the life of simple people, peasants and the middle classes who themselves are almost unconscious of it. He wrote about it in *Gods of the People*, *The End of Fear*, *The Christ at Chartres*; also, he had traced the influence of the occult tradition in English literature from Spenser to Milton and Blake. Rebecca West said that he was the wisest man she knew....

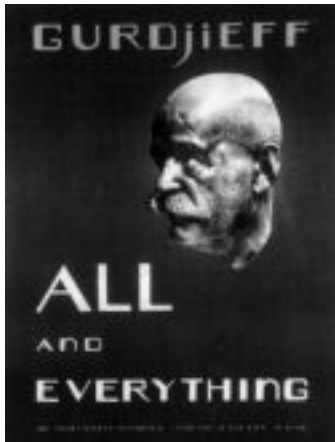
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Revision: January 1, 2000



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Facts, Fictions & Speculations

A Two Title Review

by [J. Walter Driscoll](#)

[A review by J. Walter Driscoll of *An Introduction to Gurdjieff's Beelzebub: a Modern Sufi Teaching Tale*, by Anna Challenger (from which we are pleased to present Chapter Four in this issue) and *Metanoia: Beyond the Mind We Go*, a novel by Len Maurice. Challenger and Maurice have written the first books to focus on *Beelzebub's Tales* since A. R. Orage's *Commentaries* (1961) and J. G. Bennett's *Talks* (1977).]

It's been almost 50 years since G. I. Gurdjieff's seminal *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*, the most enigmatic of his three books, was published. Largely ignored (except by students of his teaching) but, like his teaching, quietly influential, the book's impact is only recently beginning to register in popular and academic culture. There is an enormous literature documenting Gurdjieff's ideas, teaching and influence, but Anna Challenger and Len Maurice have written the first books to focus on *Beelzebub's Tales* since A. R. Orage's *Commentaries* (1961) and John G. Bennett's *Talks* (1977)....

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Henriette H. Lannes

1899–1980

by James Moore

That the Work in England is today so strongly rooted is preponderantly owed to a woman scarcely known. Active in London for nearly three decades; coping with all the difficulties of exile and a foreign language; subsuming the powerful resistance which any powerful affirmation lawfully evokes — this remarkable human being guaranteed here the Work's ethos, dynamic, and trajectory. Her name was [Henriette Lannes](#).

The sobering death of George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff on 29 October 1949 impacted on a unified Work in Paris but a diversified Work in London. Throughout the winter of 1949–1950 his senior pupil Madame [Jeanne de Salzmann](#) urgently explored her scope to harmonise the activities of the four main English factions (adherents of J. G. Bennett, Jane Heap, Maurice Nicoll, and the late Piotr Ouspensky.) In early spring 1950, having finally established the roll-call of those provisionally prepared to work together under her guidance (evidently drawing a demurral from Nicoll), she convened a meeting at 46 Colet Gardens, West Kensington and presented Madame Lannes as her designated 'responsible' and plenipotentiary in England. Some sense of the challenge thereby accepted by Madame Lannes, and indeed of her stature, will be plain to informed readers from her powerful but inherently unstable Group 1, which initially comprised George Adie, J. G. Bennett, Alfred Etievan, Jane Heap, Reginald Hoare, Cynthia Pearce, Basil Tilley, Kenneth Walker, and Aubrey Wolton.

Who then was Henriette Lannes? And what factors had thrust her into this position?

Early Years

Born on Sunday 12 November 1899 in the small village of Puyoo-Bearn in the Pyrenees, she came of peasant stock: simple, hardworking, devoutly Christian people inured to a life which, though richly textured, was physically stark. A childhood that imbued Henriette with a lifelong love of nature — trees, flowers and "my friends the animals" — ended prematurely when her father died. Immediately all her native resourcefulness was mobilised in aid of her mother's struggle for material survival; her

formal education stopped, leaving her intellectual curiosity, if anything, heightened.

Henriette's emancipation from privation and rustic life began not long afterwards when the village priest secured a minor post in Paris, co-opting the widow Lannes as his housekeeper. There in the city styled by Gurdjieff "the capital of the world" young Mlle Lannes quickly established herself by dint of hard work. Her ensuing two decades await elucidation but they imparted an impressive cultural formation and a working knowledge of English.

By the time the ancient Basque capital of Guernica was devastated on 27 April 1937, Henriette re-emerges to view as linked to Henri Tracol head of a Republican press agency in Barcelona and Madrid. Providentially, however, any risk that her energies might be dissipated by political preoccupations was circumvented by her chance meeting with Jeanne de Salzmann: "What has this woman got that I have not got?"

Engagement with the Work in France

Early in 1938 Henriette and her husband M. Tracol were received into Mme de Salzmann's circle at Sevres, which included Rene Daumal, orientalist and author of the prize-winning poetic work *Le Contre-Ciel*, his wife Vera, Philippe Lavastine, Marthe de Gaigneron, Pauline de Dampierre, Bernard Lemaitre, and later Luc Dietrich.

Virtually no relevant books had been published in French. Utterly fresh, the Work impacted overwhelmingly on Henriette: "When I heard the ideas I was dumbfounded. I could not get them out of my mind. They haunted me night and day. I felt they were true." A second and of course more radical shock occurred in October 1940 when Mme de Salzmann presented her group to Gurdjieff himself at 6 Rue des Colonels Renard: "What did he represent? Who was he? What did this being, this force, signify? I remember the ring of a deep and painful question while I was watching and listening to him: 'What is there then between you and me?'"

The social context of this meeting challenges today's imagination. Until its liberation on 25 August 1944, Paris was in the iron grip of German forces, its citizens demoralised, malnourished, and subject to curfew. Not only did Henriette engage intensively in this unique Work chapter (sketched by Pierre Schaeffer, Rene Zuber, and Henri Tracol himself) but put herself at risk in supporting Jewish group members. In late 1945, Henriette's niece Lise Tracol became Gurdjieff's housekeeper at Colonels Renard. Meanwhile Henriette herself was growing in stature, and by 8 August 1948 when Gurdjieff's car crash drew to him disparate Anglo-American followers of his ideas, he had mandated her to guide French pupils of her own. The large and still important group which she accordingly built in Lyon (later served by Henri Thomasson) held her interest and commitment to her life's end.

When Gurdjieff died we glimpse Henriette consoling Elizabeth Mayall (later Mrs Bennett) in terms conveying her oecumenical idealism: "Remember Elizabeth, this is for all of us; French, English, and American. Remember. Remember we are all together." In such a mind-set she arrived in London and

took up residence at Colet Gardens with her daughter Anne Marie and Lise Tracol.

At Work with the London Groups

Madame Henriette Lannes (to this name she reverted when M. Tracol remarried) was first and foremost a spiritual benefactor, and iconic history could do worse than seat her before her English groups: a good looking woman of medium stature, conservatively dressed but with an amber necklace and a small brooch shaped like a sea-horse; her fine hair is brushed straight back with a black segment disconcertingly dividing the silver. The eyes prevail.

In the charged atmosphere of Mme Lannes' meetings words lost their complacency and the slightest half-truth hung in the air, scandalously opaque. No group notes, no tape recordings — absolutely nothing — can convey her confrontative being. She did not split metaphysical hairs or retreat into a single grand verity, wearing it threadbare by endless iteration. She knew all her pupils in their individual idiocy and individual potential, and by a dangerous and exacting empathy shocked them into opening their eyes. She used humour; she could mimic. Possessing a cornucopia of literary, mythic, and folkloric allusion, she often tendered Gurdjieffian orthodoxies within a perennial tradition: the scattered limbs of Osiris were gathered to new metaphorical effect, and under startling scriptural authority the moving, emotional, and intellectual centres conjoined to host an epiphanic presence — "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew: Chap. 18, Verse 20.) Needless to say, Mme Lannes' command of the orthodox idiom of The System was assured — manifest not only in speech but in her major thematic study papers, commencing with 'Organic Life on Earth and the Influences acting on it and on us' (4 Dec. 1971.)

Over and above her punishing schedule of groups (minimally two a night) and innumerable administrative meetings and private consultations, Mme Lannes instigated and pursued many ancillary activities e.g. sharing the triumphs and disasters of her cherished Puppet Team. Various of Gurdjieff's dicta she translated into concrete fields of action. "We always make a profit" inspired an incorporated trading company uniquely aimed at exploring the relationship of commercial and Work values. "Take the understanding of the East and the knowledge of the West, and then search" underpinned her inter-disciplinary 'Science Study' which — served by pupils commanding many fields in the sciences and humanities — attempted an ideological confrontation between modern science and traditional knowledge. (The unpublished Proceedings of this Study, extending over seven years, constitute an unrivalled memorial of Mme Lannes' thought.)

What little time Mme Lannes reserved for herself might see her at Picketts Cottage, her thatched country retreat near Woodcote, working in her beloved flower garden or seated in summer by her traditional Gipsy caravan, reading, dealing with correspondence, and smoking an occasional Camel cigarette.

Challenging Contexts

Given Mme Lannes' inner orientation, it would be easy for a naive idealism to overlook her practical achievement in *Work Realpolitik*. Despite Mme de Salzman's endorsement, London did not fall 'ready-cooked' into her protege's mouth. Only by diplomacy and sheer force of being did Mme Lannes convince so many of England's long-entrenched Ouspenskian 'barons'; win the respect of the formidable Jane Heap and the friendship of the senior 'Obligatories' (Movements) teacher Rose Mary Nott; and later integrate the intellectual stream of Maurice Nicoll. Even then, all was not Roses, Roses. Different people understandably entertained different agendas and indications are that the important London-New York axis was dominated by Ouspensky's former pupils Basil Tilley and Lord Pentland.

No contextualisation of Mme Lannes' rock-like 'Gurdjieffian fundamentalism' would be complete without passing allusion to the successive waves of *nouvelle orientalism* which beat upon it — waves which affected the Work globally but which were particularly registered in England. J. G. Bennett's force, flair for self-publicity, authorial capacity, and weathercock messianism swept away Reginald Hoare and Aubrey Wolton, and generally multiplied problems. His contentions (1958) that the Indonesian mystic Pak Subuh was Gurdjieff's wisdom-figure Ashiata Shiemash from [Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson](#); and (1965) that the questionable figure of Idries Shah came from the 'Sarmoung Monastery' cited in [Meetings with Remarkable Men](#), might seem with the benefit of hindsight merely to invite a sardonic humour but Mme Lannes had to confront them on the spot. Nearer to home the ageing Society President Kenneth Walker unexpectedly hinted (1964 on) at his ancillary indebtedness to the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi; then (1970) the Society Vice-President Magnus Wechsler converted to Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche; and only at the cost of historical revisionism can the arguably distracting influence of Krishnamurti be decoupled from Mme de Salzman's known and regular attendance at his talks in Saanen, Switzerland.

The Curtain Falls

For more than a quarter of a century Henriette Lannes worked on unremittingly, never deviating from her commitment to Gurdjieff alone. Then, gradually, in the late 1970s, her health began to betray her; the English climate grew insupportable and her winter breaks in France became more extended. Younger London groups were now afforded contact with her at the expense of older; she battled tenaciously with her infirmities, offering up her last reserves to her ideals. In early spring 1979 the unwelcome rumour that she would not return from France hardened into fact. On 27 June she sent to each member of Oak, Poplar, Fir, Sycamore, Willow, and Pine (significantly all her groups were named after trees) the following message:

This is to say to all of you, who have worked a long time with me, *au revoir*... I use a French word that you all understand because it is the only one I can use. Those faithful to Gurdjieff and the extraordinary message he has brought shall see one another again — this is something I can have no doubt about... But I have to ask you to be more sure of what it means to be faithful. It is not to 'believe' in the truth of the ideas, not even to

become able to pass them on to others. It is an assimilation, quite comparable on a different level, to what our body does with food — in order to live. The truth they contain has to be digested in order to 'become flesh.' This is a great ambition, but also the challenge we have accepted together, and which creates between us the link that permits me to say, with confidence, *au revoir*.

Nearly another year Mme Lannes struggled on in France — hard days for her, her family, and her pupils. An untoward and major difficulty in implementing long-meditated plans to support her added an increment of painful drama, yet she did not lack willing aid from Lyon and London... Henriette Lannes died from liver cancer at 40 Avenue Valioud, 69000 St Foy, at around 10 p.m. on Wednesday, 28 May 1980.

Towards an Evaluation

To 'sum up' such a life would be an impertinence. Yet certainly Mme Lannes' epoch in London (1950–1978) was one of buoyant expansion realised in the face of grave difficulties: an epoch of unification; an epoch when, within a quadrupled membership, a responsible English nucleus was progressed a generation; an epoch when an unassailable material and administrative 'hearth' was built for a Work which never lacked its validating flame — altogether a breathtaking achievement.

And yet, and yet... consider Robert Browning's lines:

Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a heaven for?

Do they not ironically demand, if only as proof of the rank of Madame's aspiration, the acknowledgement that in some sense her life ended in poignant regret at unrealised hopes?

Of Mme Lannes' unfolding relationship with Mme de Salzman it is difficult to speak with propriety and impossible to speak with objectivity; the lower cannot judge the higher. And, nevertheless, history is due every crumb of contemporary witness. If London's dispensation and 'vibrations' evidenced their sisterly *entente* up until the 1970s, it thereafter more and more suggested Mme Lannes' dutiful deferral to Mme de Salzman's authority. That these two remarkable human beings remained undivided essentially and in commitment to Gurdjieff — who can doubt? But they were not clones. Mme Lannes did not believe that the film *Meetings with Remarkable Men* would initiate a brave new epoch; she did not place disproportionate and arguably uncanonical emphasis on long 'sittings' with eyes closed; still less did Mme Lannes consider Orage's hallowed English-language text of *Beelzebub* so impenetrable as to warrant the substantial revision ultimately effected in 1992 (incidentally with minimal prior reference to the London groups.)

Madame Lannes had visions of a Gurdjieff Work with a wholesome social face, which slowly, over decades or even centuries, would act as a spiritualising leaven in diurnal life; she even foresaw the

institution of special schools and hospitals. In practice, however, her own epoch's supervening goals confined her to small inconclusive pilot studies. Madame's implacable love for all her pupils translated itself into demands which could be felt as fierce, even exorbitant; in a handful of her disciples (that remarkable individual the late Malcolm Gibson springs instantly to mind) she evidently cultivated a special resonance. Finally, though, it seemed no-one fully realised her lofty hopes, and there were moments when a painful sense of her disappointment came through.

Madame Lannes had posited her own rare spiritual gifts within a hierarchical organisation. Indeed she built one. But she perfectly grasped that in the enlarging fissures of an enlarging institution flourished such *Fleurs du Mal* as factionalism, careerism, nepotism, over-dependency, and social narcissism. Perhaps because of this she often spoke of life as the teacher. Perhaps because of this she insisted: "We have to recognise a master in ourselves. We are alone in the face of this as we shall be alone in the face of death."

Mysteries

Who would spoil everything by masquerading as a representative disciple of such a woman? God forbid! God forbid! Yet who, of those touched by her magic, would shrink from bearing unnegotiable witness? As for me, only the grace of Henriette Lannes' mysterious promise disarms the desolate certitude that I shall not look upon her like again... One year after her passing, on 27 May 1981, Madame de Salzman held a special Studio group for certain people. She said that if we, the most indebted to Madame Lannes, could touch others spiritually, transmitting a definite quantity of finer energy, Madame Lannes need not come down to earth again... We sat in immaculate silence.

Let us leave deconstructionist crows to pick at the 'inconsistency' of these two mysteries: re-engagement with faithful pupils and freedom from further incarnation. "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." (Corinthians I: Chap. 13, Verse 12.)

~ • ~

James Moore gratefully attended Henriette Lannes' London groups from October 1957 to December 1978; his biography [Gurdjieff: the Anatomy of a Myth](#) is dedicated to her.

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Postscript: the Lannes Legacy

Though Madame Lannes' being is not reducible to her doing, some milestones of her dispensation warrant mention:

1955	The establishment (6 October) of a <i>de jure</i> charitable Work vehicle The Society for Research into the Development of Man.
1957	The acquisition (19 May) of large premises in West London. The building and dedication (23 September) of a Movements studio.
1962	The launch (11 April) of the Comonaim Import-Export Ltd experiment. A semi-open demonstration (13 May) of Movements at Rudolph Steiner Hall. The successful integration (October) of 40 of the late Maurice Nicoll's pupils, including Sam Copley and Peter Gloster.
1963	The founding (July) of The Guild for Research into Craftsmanship and its acquisition (October) of substantial premises near Windsor for Work activities.
1964	The change of name (28 January) of The Society for Research into the Development of Man to The Gurdjieff Society. The successful integration (October) of the late Jane Heap's pupils, including Michael Currer-Briggs and John Lester.
1969	The extending of help (spring) to novice Gurdjieff students in Norway resulting in the consolidation of their work and its ensuing guidance by Brenda Tripp. The production and filming (July) of a marionette play 'The Equipage' dramatising Gurdjieff's metaphor of carriage, horse, driver, and Master. The constitution (2 October) and on-going supervision (1969–76) of 'The Science Study.'
1972	The creating (July) of 'Skill Gallery' — an on-going public exhibition of specially selected craft pieces made at the Guild and its affiliated Pembridge Studio.



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Discussion on "Good and Evil"

with [A. R. Orage](#)

November 19th [1927] — Part 3 of 3

Orage: So far we've agitated the bushes in this discussion of good and evil, but I doubt if we've startled the hare. Instead of recollections to start off with, I wish one or two of you would attempt formulations of the ideas so far thrown out. This last discussion is staged really for Larry Morris, who was so dissatisfied with the first two. Larry, would you summarise what you think we've arrived at?

Larry: Last time we started with a resumé and ended by discussing new things. It's much better I think to start where we left off last week. I recollect that we stopped with a discussion of God's situation at the inception of the universe and considered the conditions under which He was forced to invent some design for it.

Orage: Forced?

Larry: He was driven by His state of fear to form this purpose.

Orage: Not driven. Is a motive called a force?

Larry: He desired to escape a disagreeable situation.

Orage: It was a free desire. He had the alternatives of passing to extinction and of willing to overcome it.

Larry: But He was terrified of extinction.

Orage: Not terrified. There was no compulsion in the matter. The reason Gurdjieff insists on this point is that the universe is non-mechanical, and maintained by a will....

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Are We Awake?

by [A. R. Orage](#)

HOW can we prove to ourselves at any given moment that we are not asleep and dreaming? Life circumstances are sometimes as fantastic as dream circumstances; and change with the same rapidity. What if we should wake up and find waking life a dream, and our present sleep and dream merely dreams within a dream?

There is a traditional doctrine, usually associated with religion, but now and then invading great literature, that our present waking state is not really being awake at all. It is not night-sleep certainly, nor is it the ordinary somnambulism or sleep-walking; but it is, the tradition says, a special form of sleep comparable to a hypnotic trance in which, however, there is no hypnotist but only suggestion or auto-suggestion. In the first instance, from the moment of birth and before, we are under the suggestion that we are not fully awake; and it is universally suggested to our consciousness that we must dream the dream of this world—as our parents and friends dream it. Young children, it is notorious, find it hard at first to distinguish between this fancy, that is to say, their other day-dreams, and the dream their parents live in. Later in childhood, when the original suggestion has taken, auto-suggestion keeps us in the state more or less continuously. Our friends and neighbours, and all the objects we perceive, act as soporifics and dream-suggestions. We no longer, as in early childhood, rub our eyes in doubt of the reality of this world. We are fully convinced not only that it is real, but that there is no other. We dream but we do not doubt that we are awake.

Religion, it is obvious, presupposes that mortal life is a mode of sleep from which it is possible to wake up to eternal life. The New Testament, for example, constantly makes use of the imagery of sleep and waking. According to the Gospels and the Epistles we sleep with Adam and wake with Christ; and the refrain of the Doctrine is that we should strive to wake up from our present waking state and to be 'born again'. In recent literature the idea has been exploited by Ibsen and H. G. Wells among other writers. Ibsen's play, *When We Dead Awaken*, and Wells' novel, *The Sleeper Wakes*, assume in their very titles that we humans are asleep but can wake.

It is naturally difficult, of course, to convince ourselves that we are asleep. A sleeping person, in the midst of a dream, cannot usually wake himself up. The dream may be so unpleasant that it wakes him; or he awakes naturally; or he may be shaken into waking. Very seldom can one voluntarily wake oneself. It is even more difficult to wake voluntarily from hypnotic sleep. And if from these relatively

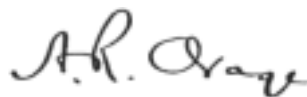
light states of sleep it is hard for us to wake of our own accord, we can imagine the difficulty of waking voluntarily from the profounder sleep and dream of our waking state.

But how can we convince ourselves that we are really in a form of sleep when, as it appears to us, we are really awake? By comparing the two chief states of consciousness known to us and observing their strikingly common features. What, for instance, are the outstanding features of our ordinary sleep as known to us through our recollected dreams? The dream happens, that is to say, we neither deliberately initiate it nor do we create its figures and events. And in this respect it resembles waking life, in that we do not predetermine our experiences, nor do we create or invent the figures and events we meet from day to day.

Another common element of our sleeping and waking modes of life is the variability of our conduct. We are sometimes horrified, sometimes gratified, to recall how we have behaved in a dream situation. It is true that whatever our conduct may have been, humiliating or flattering to our pride, we couldn't have made it otherwise. Our disquiet or satisfaction is solely an account of the presumed revelation of our unconscious selves. But how, at bottom, do these facts differ from the facts of our waking life-dreams? In life-dreams also we cut a sorry or a good figure, not by pre-determined design but as it happens; and our regret or satisfaction is equally contingent on the effect the episode has upon our self-pride. But can we truthfully say, beforehand, that, whatever happens, we shall behave ourselves thus and thus and not otherwise? Are we not subject to the suggestion of the moment and liable to be carried away from our resolution by anger, greed, enthusiasm? Exactly as in sleep-dream, our waking life is always taking us by surprise; and we are constantly behaving as we should not have imagined we could behave. Nor, in retrospect, can we truthfully say that we could have done better or worse in yesterday's situation. If it were repeated exactly, no doubt we could. But, taking it as and when it was, with ourselves as we then were, it could no more have been different than any night-dreams we have experienced.

Serious examination of the parallelism between the two states of sleeping and waking reveals many other similarities. One more only need be mentioned here—the close resemblance of our memory as regards the experience of the two states. It is true that of our waking life we preserve a more or less continuous recollection, whereas our dream-life is a series of discontinuous memories. But apart from this specific difference our actual memory-faculty appears to behave much the same in relation to both forms of experience. We know how difficult it is to recall at will a dream of the night before; the dream was vivid, and all its details were in our mind on awaking; but in an instant the whole of it has vanished, leaving not a wrack behind. Memory of yesterday's life-dream is not so treacherous, or capricious as regards its main features; but where today is the vivid detail of yesterday? We saw clearly a thousand and one objects, we even attended to them. We listened to conversation, we spoke, we watched men and things in the street, we read books or newspapers, we read and wrote letters, we ate and drank and did or perceived a host, that no man can number, of objects and actions. That was only yesterday, yesterday's vivid waking dream. How many of those details remain in our memory today; or how many could we by any effort recall? As completely as the dreams of the night, the mass of our life-dreams of yesterday fade into the oblivion of our unconsciousness.

It may be feared that there is something morbid in the foregoing speculations; and that an effort to see our waking life as merely a special form of sleep must diminish its importance for us and ours for it. But this attitude towards a possible and probable fact is itself morbidly timid. The truth is that just as in night-dreams the first symptom of waking is to suspect that one is dreaming, the first symptom of waking from the waking state—the second awaking of religion—is the suspicion that our present waking state is dreaming likewise. To be aware that we are asleep is to be on the point of waking; and to be aware that we are only partially awake is the first condition of becoming and making ourselves more fully awake.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "A. R. Orage".

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Featured: [Fall 1998 Issue, Vol. II \(1\)](#)

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Gurdjieff

International Review

Winter 1998/1999 Issue, Vol. II No. 2

Special Issue on P. D. Ouspensky

Editorial Introduction

P. D. Ouspensky was a major contributor to Twentieth century ideas, anticipating many of the key questions in philosophy, psychology and religion that have driven and informed us throughout the century. This issue celebrates Ouspensky as a leading independent philosopher and a major exponent of Gurdjieff's teachings.

P. D. Ouspensky by John Pentland

First published in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* edited by Mircea Eliade (1987) New York: Macmillan, Volume 11, pp. 143–144, Pentland's sketch offers a succinct and original synopsis of Ouspensky's contributions as an independent thinker and writer and as a leading exponent of Gurdjieff's teaching.

P. D. Ouspensky: a Biographical Outline

This informed biographical outline was first published in *Remembering Pytor Demianovich Ouspensky* (1978) a brochure compiled by Merrily E. Taylor and is reproduced with the kind permission of the Manuscripts and Archives Division at Yale University Library.



"Gurdjieff gave me many new ideas I did not know before, and he gave a system I did not know before. About schools I did know, for I had been travelling and looking for schools for 10 years. He had an extraordinary system, and quite new. Some separate fragments of it could be found elsewhere, but not connected and put together like they are in this system."

P. D. Ouspensky

"A characteristic of every one of Ouspensky's meetings, which he attended until a few months before his death, was their remarkable intensity. He made demands for the utmost honesty not only on himself but on his pupils as well."

John Pentland

A Brief Overview of Certain Aspects of the Thought of Petyr Demianovich Ouspensky **[Sample Only]**

Michael Presley focuses on *Tertium Organum*, *A New Model of the Universe* and *Strange Life of Ivan Osokin* to identify and discuss Ouspensky's philosophical ideas as an original thinker and creative synthesizer, quite apart from his influence as a major interpreter of Gurdjieff.

In Anti-Bolshevist Russia

An article by journalist Carl Eric Bechhofer Roberts first published in *The New Age* (Jan 6, 1921) London: XXVIII (10), p. 113, and later in *In Denikin's Russia and the Caucasus, 1919–1920*. Stranded in the midst of the Russian revolution, the author stays several days in a barn with Ouspensky and Zaharov, another of Gurdjieff's students. Over a bottle of vodka, Ouspensky engagingly relates some of his light-hearted Moscow and Essentuki adventures.

The Romance and Mystery of Tertium Organum **[Sample Only]**

First published in *Merely Players* (1929) Knopf, a collection of Claude Bragdon's essays, this article describes how Bragdon and Nicolas Bessaraboff came to translate *Tertium Organum*, which paved the way for Ouspensky's favorable reception in the West.

Not a Cult: Dancing to Develop the Mind **[Sample Only]**

This article was written by journalist E. C. Bowyer as part of [a series of four articles](#) on the Prieuré in the *Daily News* (Feb. 19, 1923) London and is republished here for the first time. While visiting Gurdjieff's "Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man" which had opened five months earlier, Bowyer quotes

"Great care is taken throughout the book [In Search of the Miraculous] to characterize the master-pupil relationship between Gurdjieff and his circle. The resulting picture of Gurdjieff is of a man obviously possessing immense wisdom and personal power, capable at once of painfully stripping away the pupil's 'mask' while carefully guiding him through the emotional and bodily experiences necessary for the process of deep learning."

Jacob Needleman

"One gets the idea from reading Ouspensky that, indeed, man is an experiment, but whether he is or will ever be a successful experiment is a big question."

Michael Presley

"Gurdjieff's artistry, as embodied in Beelzebub's Tales, demands extraordinary efforts on the part of the reader in order to evoke the author's hoped-for response... Beelzebub's Tales is objective art to the degree that we, as readers, permit it to be in the act of our effortful and conscious participation in this work."

Anna Challenger

"People have been drinking since the beginning of the world, but

extensively from an interview with Ouspensky. This article ran along with coverage of the excavations of Tutankhamon's tomb.

Strange Life of Ivan Osokin

[Sample Only]

A commentary by John Pentland first published in *Material for Thought* (1972) San Francisco: Number 4, and subsequently published as the foreword to the Penguin Metaphysical Library Series edition of *Ivan Osokin* (1973). It is published here with the kind permission of Mrs. Mary Rothenberg. Lord Pentland provides valuable and original commentary on Ouspensky's writings.

The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution

[Sample Only]

An anonymous commentary first published in *Material for Thought* (1974) San Francisco: Number 5 and reissued here with the kind permission of the editors. It provides informed analysis with many astute, original observations about the book, as well as about Ouspensky's purpose and methods during the last few decades of his life.

In Search of the Miraculous

A synopsis by Dr. Jacob Needleman originally presented at the 1980 national meetings of the American Academy of Religion and first published in an expanded form as "Gurdjieff, Ouspensky and Esoteric Philosophy" in *Consciousness and Tradition* (1982) New York: Crossroads. This revision is published with the author's kind permission. Professor Needleman offers a thoroughly considered synopsis of the cosmological and psychological ideas contained in Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous*.

P. D. Ouspensky: a Brief Bibliography

J. Walter Driscoll surveys the major writings by and about

they have never found anything to go better with vodka than a salted cucumber."

P. D. Ouspensky

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Ouspensky, and highlights some additional writings that show his influence.

Other New Features

Gurdjieff's Theory of Art

[Sample Only]

The second of four installments, this revised Third Chapter of Dr. Anna Challenger's Ph.D. dissertation from Kent State University (1990) is published with the author's kind permission. She provides a thoughtful analysis of Gurdjieff's ideas of art, particularly as they apply to his writings.



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

P. D. Ouspensky

(1878–1947)

by [John Pentland](#)

Petr Dem'ianovich Uspenskii; Russian author, thinker, and mystic.

Ouspensky's *Tertium Organum*, written in 1911, was published in New York in 1922 and within a few years became a best-seller in America and made him a world-wide reputation. Intended to supplement the *Organon* of Aristotle and the *Novum Organum* of Francis Bacon, *Tertium Organum* is based on the author's personal experiments in changing consciousness; it proposes a new level of thought about the fundamental questions of human existence and a way to liberate man's thinking from its habitual patterns. *A New Model of the Universe*, a collection of essays published earlier in Russia, was published in London in 1930. But Ouspensky will be chiefly remembered for *In Search of the Miraculous*, published posthumously in 1949 and later in several foreign languages under the title *Fragments of an Unknown Teaching*. This work is by far the most lucid account yet available of the teaching of G. I. Gurdjieff, and it has been a principal cause of the growing influence of Gurdjieff's ideas.

Ouspensky was born in Moscow and spent his childhood there. His mother was a painter. His father, who died early, had a good position as a railroad surveyor; he was fond of music, in which Ouspensky showed no interest. Of precocious intelligence, Ouspensky left school early with a decision not to take the academic degrees for which he was qualified and began to travel and write. Through his reading and journalistic work, first in Moscow and then, from 1909 on, in Saint Petersburg, he "knew everyone." His early writings can be regarded as a final flowering of the great Russian literary tradition of the late nineteenth century. But, although influenced by such movements as the Theosophy of H. P. Blavatsky (whom he never met), he distrusted and disliked the "absurdities" of contemporary life and kept apart from the secret revolutionary politics with which almost all Russian intelligentsia of the period sympathized.

In 1915, returning to Russia from India to find that war had broken out in Europe, he gave lectures on his "search for the miraculous" and attracted large audiences in Saint Petersburg and Moscow. Among his listeners was Sof'ia Grigor'evna Maksimenko, who became his wife. They had no children.

In the same year, he was sought out by the pupils of Gurdjieff and reluctantly agreed to meet him. The meeting was a turning point in Ouspensky's life. He recognized at once the value of the ideas that Gurdjieff had discovered in the East and that he himself had looked for in vain. "I realized," he wrote, "that I had met with a completely new system of thought, surpassing all I knew before. This system threw a new light on psychology and explained what I could not understand before in esoteric ideas." He began to collect people and to arrange meetings at which Gurdjieff developed his message, and from that moment the study and practice of these new ideas constituted Ouspensky's principal aim.

In June 1917, after four months' service in the army, from which he was honorably discharged on account of poor eyesight, the impending revolution caused Ouspensky to consider leaving Russia to continue his work in London. But he delayed his departure to spend nearly a year in difficult political conditions with Gurdjieff and a few of his pupils at Essentuki in the northern Caucasus.

As early as 1918, however, Ouspensky began to feel that a break with Gurdjieff was inevitable, that "he had to go"—to seek another teacher or to work independently. The break between the two men, teacher and pupil, each of whom had received much from the other, has never been satisfactorily explained. They met for the last time in Paris in 1930.

In 1919 Ouspensky and his family remained in very harsh conditions in the hands of the Bolsheviks in Essentuki (see *Letters from Russia*, 1978). He assembled some students there but in 1920, when Essentuki was freed by the White Army, moved to Constantinople. In August 1921 he was able to leave for London, and in November, with the help of Lady Rothermere, [A. R. Orage](#), and other influential people, he started private meetings and lectures there. These continued until 1940, after the outbreak of World War II, when he moved his family to the United States and, with a few London pupils, began his lectures again in New York. Early in 1947 he returned to resume his work in London, where he died in October of the same year.

A characteristic of every one of Ouspensky's meetings, which he attended until a few months before his death, was their remarkable intensity. He made demands for the utmost honesty not only on himself but on his pupils as well. His method was to invite "new people" to listen to five or six written lectures read aloud by one of the men close to him. (These lectures were published in 1950 as *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution*.) Further understanding of the ideas had to be extracted from him directly by question and answer. Irrelevant questions were treated summarily. Simple rules, which to some appeared arbitrary, but which Ouspensky considered essential to self-training, were introduced—and explained at rare intervals. Pupils who wished further application of the training were invited to his country house in New Jersey, where practical work was organized by Madame Ouspensky. Transcripts of all the meetings are preserved in the [P. D. Ouspensky Memorial Collection at the Yale University Library](#).

Bibliography

All of Ouspensky's principal works are available in English, translated and/or edited by various hands

and issued by various publishers in London and New York. Among them are:

- *Letters from Russia* ([1919] 1978),
- *Tertium Organum: The Third Canon of Thought; A Key to the Enigmas of the World*, 2nd ed., rev. ([1922] 1981),
- *A New Model of the Universe: Principles of the Psychological Method in Its Application to Problems of Science, Religion and Art* ([1930] 1971),
- *Strange Life of Ivan Osokin* (1947),
- *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* ([1949] 1965),
- *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution* ([1950] 1973),
- *Talks with a Devil* (1972),
- *Conscience: the Search for Truth* (1979),
- A selection of transcripts of Ouspensky's meetings with his pupils were published as: *The Fourth Way: A Record of Talks and Answers to Questions Based on the Teachings of G. I. Gurdjieff*, edited by J. G. Bennett and translated by Katya Petroff (1957).

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

P. D. Ouspensky

A Biographical Outline

Compiled by Merrily E. Taylor

[This biographical outline was first published in *Remembering Pytor Demianovich Ouspensky*, a brochure compiled and edited by Merrily E. Taylor and celebrating the acquisition of The P. D. Ouspensky Memorial Collection by [Yale University Library](#) in 1978. Copies of the entire brochure can be acquired at a cost of \$4.50 by writing Yale University Library, Manuscripts and Archives, P.O. Box 208240, New Haven, CT 06520-8240 or calling (203) 432-1735. Their e-mail address is: mssa.assist@yale.edu.]

Thirty years after his death Ouspensky's books are still being bought and read. The six books in English—*Strange Life of Ivan Osokin*, *Tertium Organum*, *A New Model of the Universe*, *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution*, *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching*, and *The Fourth Way*—sell over 40,000 copies a year. They have been translated into French, German, Spanish, and other languages. Yet both his teaching (called 'the System' or 'the Work' by his pupils) and Ouspensky himself remain virtually unknown. The System, Ouspensky said, cannot be learned from books; if it could, there would be no need for Schools. As for himself, he was convinced that he had lived this life before, that is, in the limited sense of human understanding. In the *Autobiographical Fragment* printed as the introduction to this [*Remembering Pytor Demianovich Ouspensky*] brochure, he wrote, 'In 1905, during the months of strikes and disorders which ended in the armed insurrection in Moscow, I wrote a novel based on the idea of eternal recurrence.' Six years later, in *A New Model of the Universe*, he combined the three dimensions of space with the three dimensions of time: 'Three-dimensionality is a function of our senses. Time is the boundary of our senses. Six-dimensional space is reality, the world as it is.' We are one-dimensional in relation to time: Before - Now - After, and we call time our fourth dimension without really understanding that there must be a line of the fifth dimension perpendicular to the line of time, 'The line of eternity ... Eternity can be an infinite number of finite "times."'

The novel written in 1905, when Ouspensky was only 27, was not published in Russian until 10 years later, under the title *Kinema-drama*. Although it was translated into English in the 1920s, it remained in manuscript until the last year of Ouspensky's life when he had it published as *Strange Life of Ivan Osokin*. The timing of this publication seems significant, for the novel states that the knowledge of

having lived before is a great secret, given to a man only once. For the man who learns this secret, eternal recurrence is no longer eternal; he has only a few more lives, perhaps only one or two, 'to escape this trap called life.' In the book, *The Magician*—an entirely imaginary character—tells Ivan Osokin:

A man can be given only what he can use; and he can use only that for which he has sacrificed something... So if a man wants to acquire important knowledge or new powers, he must sacrifice other things important to him at the moment. Moreover, he can only get as much as he has given up for it... You cannot have results without causes. By your sacrifice you create causes... Now the question of what to sacrifice and how to sacrifice. You say you have nothing. Not quite. You have your life. So you can sacrifice your life. It is a very small price to pay since you meant to throw it away in any case. Instead of that, give me your life and I will see what can be made of you... I shall not require the whole of your life. Twenty, even fifteen years will be sufficient... When this time is over you will be able to use your knowledge for yourself.

Ouspensky discriminated between ordinary knowledge and 'important knowledge' even as a schoolboy, and from the age of 18 onwards 'to acquire important knowledge' became the chief aim of his life. Thus he began to write and to travel extensively—in Russia, in the East, in Europe. In 1907 he 'found theosophical literature... It produced a very strong impression on me although I at once saw its weak side ... that it had no continuation. But it opened doors for me into a new and bigger world. I discovered the idea of esotericism ... and received a new impulse for the study of "higher dimensions."' He moved from Moscow to St. Petersburg in 1909, where he continued the study of occult literature and gave public lectures on such subjects as the Tarot, Yogis and Superman. A collection of essays on these subjects and *The Symbolism of the Tarot* were published in 1913, but Ouspensky's major work at this time was *Tertium Organum* which was published in 1912.

Tertium Organum was immediately recognised as a 'magnum opus.' As Claude Bragdon wrote in his Introduction to the [English translation](#): 'In naming his book *Tertium Organum* Ouspensky reveals at a stroke that astounding audacity which characterizes his thought throughout... Such a title says, in effect: "Here is a book which will reorganize all knowledge. The *Organon* of Aristotle formulated the laws under which the subject thinks; the *Novum Organum* of Bacon, the laws under which the object may be known; but the Third Canon of Thought existed before these two, and ignorance of its laws does not justify their violation. *Tertium Organum* shall guide and govern human thought henceforth.'"

Ouspensky had by now refined his aim to a search for an esoteric school which could be followed and proven step by step—not the kind of school which the Magician had offered Ivan Osokin, where a man had to sacrifice everything before he could start, before he could know whether the school did in fact possess the 'important knowledge' which he sought. He set out once again for the East and found in India and Ceylon schools which interested him very much but nevertheless were not what he sought. He had decided to continue his search in the Mohammedan East, chiefly in Russian Central Asia and in Persia, but he was prevented from doing so by the outbreak of the First World War in August 1913. His return to Russia under the conditions of war was by a circuitous route through London, Norway, and

Finland, and he reached St. Petersburg in November 1914. There, early in 1915, he gave public lectures based on his travels in India and Ceylon. At the lectures on *The Problems of Death* and *In Search of the Miraculous* there were over a thousand people in the audience, and afterwards many people came to see him or wrote to him. (He could probably have started a 'school' of his own if he had compromised the integrity and honesty which characterized his entire life.) After Easter he went to Moscow and gave these lectures there; two men in the audience told him that there was a local group which was engaged in occult investigations and through them Ouspensky met Gurdjieff. In the first chapter of *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching*, Ouspensky has recorded some of the conversations between himself and Gurdjieff during the first week of their acquaintance. From these it is clear that this was to be no ordinary teacher-and-pupil relationship and that Ouspensky was accepted as a thinker and writer of no mean stature.

Before joining Gurdjieff's group, Ouspensky explained that he was a writer and must remain free to decide for himself what he would write and what he would not write. He could not promise to keep secret anything which he learned from Gurdjieff; moreover, he had been working for many years on questions of time and space, higher dimensions, the idea of esotericism, and so on, so that it would be very difficult to separate later what Gurdjieff had told him from what his own mind already contained or might afterwards produce. It was agreed between them that Ouspensky would not write without understanding what he was writing, and at Constantinople in 1921 just before Ouspensky left for England, Gurdjieff gave full permission for the writing of an account of the teaching and system.

Ouspensky must have begun writing this account soon after his arrival in London, because the oldest surviving manuscript of *Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* is dated 'London, 1925.' However, Ouspensky was already acquainted with G. R. S. Meade, and when he learned that one of Meade's books had the title *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, he realized that his title would have to be changed. (Nonetheless, when chapters were read to his groups in London, they were always referred to as 'from *Fragments*.') He was still revising the text when the Second World War began in September 1939; even so, it would seem to be an extraordinary sacrifice that he did not publish this seminal book during his life. In fact, after his three years of study with Gurdjieff, Ouspensky published only what he had written previously (*Strange Life of Ivan Osokin* and *A New Model of the Universe*) and nothing whatever about the System. All three books about the System and the Work were published after his death by Madame Ouspensky—*The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution*, *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching*, and *The Fourth Way*.

Ouspensky had to return to his work in St. Petersburg after that week of meetings with Gurdjieff in Moscow, and it was already autumn before Gurdjieff visited St. Petersburg. There Ouspensky introduced Gurdjieff to his groups, and there began the exposition of the System and the practical study of methods for development which continued through almost three years of war and revolution.

Ouspensky had an unusually clear perception of current situations because he took account not only of the past but of its future implications. History, he said, is not only history of the past but also history of the future. In February 1917 he spoke to Gurdjieff about leaving Russia and waiting out the end of the war in a neutral country, but got nothing definite on which he could base his own actions. That was, in

fact, Gurdjieff's last visit to St. Petersburg, for the revolution and the abdication of Nicholas II took place a month later; 'March 1917, the end of Russian history' was Ouspensky's note. Gurdjieff left Moscow for the Caucasus before the revolution but asked Ouspensky to continue the work of the St. Petersburg groups until his promised return for Easter; then a week after Easter a telegram came to say that he would arrive in May. This most difficult time for Ouspensky ended with a telegram from Alexandropol in June: 'If you want to rest come here to me.'

The rest lasted only two weeks. The last six weeks of the summer of 1917 were spent in Essentuki, where Gurdjieff unfolded the plan of the whole work to a group of just over a dozen people, as described in Chapter 17 of *In Search of the Miraculous*. Suddenly, everything was changed by Gurdjieff's announcement that he was dispersing the whole group and stopping all work; Ouspensky confesses that his confidence in Gurdjieff began to waver from that moment. Some months later, in February 1918, a circular letter over Ouspensky's signature was sent by Gurdjieff to all the members of the Moscow and St. Petersburg groups, inviting them to come with those near to them to Essentuki to work with Gurdjieff, and about 40 people came.

Now Ouspensky saw that there were changes in the nature and direction of Gurdjieff's work, so that if Ouspensky stayed with him he would not be going in the same direction as at the beginning. Before he met Gurdjieff, Ouspensky knew enough about the principles and rules of esoteric schools to understand that if a pupil disagreed with his *guru*, there was only one thing for him to do—leave. Ouspensky moved into a separate house in Essentuki and resumed working on his books.

Ouspensky was never a man to talk unnecessarily, nor did he need to explain his actions to others. However, almost 20 years later under persistent questioning during a meeting of one of his groups in London, he explained why he had left Gurdjieff:

When I met Gurdjieff I began to work with him on the basis of certain principles which I could understand and accept. He said: 'First of all you must not believe anything, and second you must not do anything you don't understand.' I accepted him because of that. Then after two or three years, I saw him going against these principles. He demanded from people to accept what they did not believe and to do what they did not understand. Why this happened I don't pretend to offer any theory. (From the typescript of a meeting on October 13, 1937.)

Gurdjieff left Essentuki with a few people in August 1918. Ouspensky later wrote in *In Search of the Miraculous*:

I had decided to leave Essentuki, but I did not want to leave before Gurdjieff did. In this respect I had a strange kind of feeling. I wanted to wait until the end; to do everything that depended upon me so that afterwards I could tell myself that I had not let a single possibility escape me. It was very difficult for me to reject the idea of working with Gurdjieff... I must confess that I felt very silly. I had not gone abroad when it was possible

in order to work with Gurdjieff, and the final outcome was that I had parted from him and stayed with the bolsheviks. (p. 375)

The last 10 pages of *In Search of the Miraculous* give a very abbreviated account of Ouspensky's beginning of independent work along the lines of the St. Petersburg groups. In 1920, in Constantinople, many people were attracted to his lectures, but when Gurdjieff arrived a few months later from Tiflis, Ouspensky still hoped to work with him and handed all his groups to him. The same difficulties arose as in Essentuki and in August 1921 Ouspensky left for London, where he once more began independent work. Gurdjieff arrived in London in 1922, having failed in his third and fourth attempts to establish his '[Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man](#)' in Berlin and Dresden. Ouspensky introduced Gurdjieff to his own groups and helped him collect money for his Institute in France. A considerable sum was thus raised, and with this Gurdjieff bought the historic Chateau Prieuré in Avon, near Fontainebleau. In 1922 he opened his institute there.

Ouspensky found the work at the Prieuré very interesting but did not accept Gurdjieff's invitations to go and live there because he did not understand the direction of the work and felt elements of instability in the organization of the Institute. He was, however, at the Prieuré on the day in January 1924 when Gurdjieff left with some of his pupils for America, which reminded Ouspensky very much of the departure from Essentuki in 1918. When he returned to London, Ouspensky announced that his work in the future would proceed quite independently.

The typescripts of Ouspensky's meetings from 1921 to 1947 form the major part of the gift to Yale University Library. *The Fourth Way* consists of verbatim extracts from these typescripts, but several more volumes would be needed to include the whole, even though a number of papers have been lost since this book's publication in 1957.

Questions about Gurdjieff were not permitted by Ouspensky unless they were necessary for understanding the nature of a school of the Fourth Way—its principles, rules, methods, and origin. The following exchange took place in a meeting held on November 4, 1937:

Ouspensky: Gurdjieff gave me many new ideas I did not know before, and he gave a system I did not know before. About schools I did know, for I had been travelling and looking for schools for 10 years. He had an extraordinary system, and quite new. Some separate fragments of it could be found elsewhere, but not connected and put together like they are in this system. And certain things, particularly belonging to the psychological side, were quite a revelation. And also on many other lines. This was sufficient proof for me that this system was not a thing one can meet with every day. And I had already met with a sufficient number of schools to be able to judge.

Question: Did you never ask Gurdjieff about the origin of the system?

Ouspensky: We all asked about 10 times a day and every time the answer was different.

Question: Did you ask Gurdjieff why he always gave different answers?

Ouspensky: Yes.

Question: What did he say?

Ouspensky: He said he never gave different answers.

Question: Has it ever crossed your mind to regret having ever met Gurdjieff?

Ouspensky: Never. Why? I got very much from him. I am always very grateful to myself that after the first evening I asked him when I could see him next time. If I had not, we would not be sitting here now.

Question: But you wrote two very brilliant books.

Ouspensky: They were only books. I wanted more. I wanted something for myself.

Question: Where did the schools come from that taught Gurdjieff's school?

Ouspensky: It is possible to understand that it was somewhere in Central Asia. But what it was, I don't know. Gurdjieff gave several descriptions, and one of them was very interesting and possible. You must understand the situation: after the Revolution, the possibility to go to that country disappeared. If life were normal, I would go there and try to find this school, but as it is there was no possibility to go there. And probably now everything has disappeared. One school he described was near Kashgar in Chinese Turkestan. But round it there has been war ever since, so probably nothing remains of it now, if there was such a school.

Ouspensky once remarked that he had found himself with the beginnings of a school on his hands, so it is possible that he himself had not sought such responsibility. He told people who wished to come to his meetings that there could be no guarantee that they would find what they were looking for or that they would get the results that they were expecting. He warned them that there were big dangers and big risks on the Fourth Way, because this particular system leaves man very free. Consciousness and will cannot be created by following a restrictive system.

In retrospect, the long period from 1924 to 1934 in which Ouspensky did not let the work develop was perhaps due mainly to his understanding of the principles of school work, one requirement of which is the training of a sufficient number of people to take some of the responsibility for increasing numbers of new people. When expansion began in 1934, Ouspensky wrote a set of introductory lectures which could be read to a new group of people. Through the classical discipline of questions and answers, these people

could discover the relativity of their understanding and how it could increase by following all the indications given.

New people were told beforehand of the conditions they should be prepared to accept: they must not talk about what they heard to their family and friends, no payment would be accepted, and it would take at least five lectures to see whether one wished to continue or not. The room in which groups met held only about 50 people, and this created a feeling of common endeavor which was quite unusual for a set of strangers who were seeing and hearing one another for the first time. There was an additional sense of proximity to Ouspensky. Perhaps the most noticeable thing in any meeting, no matter how long one had been going to them, was the unexpected newness of what one heard. Questions would range over the whole field of human affairs and interests, and the questioner might be exceptionally well-versed in the subject of his question, yet Ouspensky's answer always contained something quite new.

The expansion of the work both required and made possible larger opportunities and better organization. In 1935 a country house and farm about 20 miles from London were bought; here some of his older pupils lived, and practical work of various kinds was arranged for as many as 100 people on weekends. In 1938 a larger house was found in London; this house had a studio with a capacity of over 300 people. Its acquisition made possible the formation of the Historico-Psychological Society, giving an external form to the work and 'a brass plate on the door.' The Constitution, Objects, and Organization of this Society as drawn up by Ouspensky is a document of great interest. He had written in the 1926 version of *Fragments*:

The system is waiting for workers. There is no statement and no thought in it which would not require and admit further development and elaboration. But there are great difficulties in the way of training people for this work, since an ordinary intellectual study of the system is quite insufficient; and there are very few people who agree to other methods of study who are at the same time capable of working by these methods.

Twelve years later, in developing and setting down the 'Objects' of the Historico-Psychological Society, Ouspensky indicated the way to continue in the system:

1. The study of problems of the evolution of man and particularly of the idea of *psycho-transformism*.
2. The study of psychological schools in different historical periods and in different countries, and the study of their influence on the moral and intellectual development of humanity.
3. Practical investigation of methods of self-study and self-development according to principles and methods of psychological schools.
4. Research work in the history of religions, of philosophy, of science, and of art with the object of establishing their common origin when it can be found and different psychological levels in each of them.

The new London house enabled new kinds of work to be started, of which only one will be mentioned,

because for over 20 years Ouspensky had hoped to have his own press. One of his pupils whose specialty was printing, set up a press in the basement of the house, and here *Six Psychological Lectures* was set, printed, and bound as the first publication of The Historico-Psychological Society. Although 50 sets were bound, some years later the printer wrote to the Yale Librarian that Ouspensky issued only five copies and recalled three of them, and almost all the rest were lost during the Second World War.

One measure of the increased pace of activity from April 1938 to the outbreak of the war in September 1939 is the number of volumes of typescripts of meetings; there are 13 volumes for these 16 months, and for the rest of the 25 years from 1922 to 1947 there are 21 volumes.

Restrictions imposed by war made continuation of the work in England impossible; there was civilian as well as military conscription, rationing of all forms of food and energy, and the 'black-out' to avoid easy night targets for enemy aircraft. The country house at Lyne in Surrey became a haven for a number of people, and Ouspensky held small meetings there while he waited to assess the probable duration and extent of the war. After the loss of Europe to Germany, he realized that it would be a long war and decided to go to the United States of America, where he had many friends. Ouspensky had considered this move as early as 1922.

Ouspensky held meetings in New York from 1941 to 1946 (to which many people came). Franklin Farms, a large house and estate in New Jersey, was put at his disposal. Here Madame Ouspensky organized practical work very much as she had done at Lyne Place in England, and Ouspensky was able to continue his writing and lecturing.

Although a few members of the London groups came to America during the war and others visited after the end of the war, Ouspensky had not, in his own view, finished his obligations to his followers in England. He felt that they must now be 'set free' from the system to find the truth in their own ways. Although he was already very ill, he returned to England early in 1947. The weather was bitterly cold and everything was still rationed and in short supply, and the London house had been commandeered by the Admiralty. Nevertheless, through the great efforts of those who had so eagerly awaited his return, he was able to hold six meetings with audiences of more than 300 people in the large studio. Few, if any, of those in the pre-war groups had realized that the work *as they had known it* could not continue without Ouspensky himself, and now they were ill-prepared to be told that they were free to continue the pursuit of their aim in whatever way each individual decided for himself. Nonetheless, it was necessary to accept Ouspensky's decision with as much courage as possible.

The meaning of Ouspensky's life, his teaching of the system, and his organization of the work is a mystery insoluble by ordinary minds. One realizes that, as he said, the system cannot be learned from books, but that a school is necessary; and a school depends on a teacher whose level of being, knowledge, and understanding is different from that of the pupils. Ouspensky said that his system differed from all others 'in teaching level of being,' and that everything else depended upon that.

This idea of levels of being was expressed by the Sufi poet Jalal u'din Rumi in the thirteenth century:

I died a mineral and became a plant.
I died a plant and rose an animal.
I died an animal and I was man.
Why should I fear? When was I less by dying?
Yet once more I shall die as man, to soar with the blessed angels.
But even from angelhood I must pass on.
All except God perishes.
When I have sacrificed my angel soul,
I shall become that which no mind has ever conceived.

Ouspensky was often asked if the passage of system ideas into general currency would not be beneficial to humanity and might also help the school; on one such occasion (a meeting on October 4, 1937), he answered as follows:

It will happen by itself. There is no need for us to worry about it. Ideas will spread, maybe in our lifetime and maybe after us. Most of these ideas will enter into scientific or philosophic language, but they will enter in the wrong form. There will be no right distinction between doing and happening, and many thoughts of ordinary thinking will be mixed with these ideas; so they will not be ideas we know now, only words will be similar. If you don't understand this, you will lose in this way.

The idea of 'recurrence' as a concept came from Ouspensky, who always emphasized that it was not part of the system, although recurrence did not contradict it. From a survey of Ouspensky's writings, one could conclude that, for him, recurrence was a fact. As in *Strange Life of Ivan Osokin* and in Rumi's poem, to escape recurrence required sacrifice. Perhaps the inner meaning of those last months in 1947 was the sacrifice of his life's work.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

A Brief Overview of Certain Aspects of the Thought of Petyr Demianovich Ouspensky

by [Michael Presley](#)

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Introduction

It is my hope that this brief survey will, in small measure, place [Petyr Ouspensky](#)'s ideas in some sort of historical context within modern philosophic thought. Also, it is my express intention to, as much as possible, convey Ouspensky's ideas separately from whatever attribution the writings offer toward the popularization of the legacy of G. I. Gurdjieff. This is, of course, not in any way meant to discount Ouspensky's acumen as an interpreter of Gurdjieff's "Russian period" but, generally, the pre-Gurdjieff (and non-Gurdjieff) writings have been relegated to a position of secondary importance in favor of specific teachings learnt from Gurdjieff. And while this in itself would be more than a suitable legacy it is nevertheless the case that Ouspensky remains, if not a distinctly original thinker, certainly a creative synthesizer whose writings stand on their own—that is, apart from the Gurdjieff material. Indeed, at least from a philosophical and productive literary standpoint there are grounds for thinking that Ouspensky's native thought likely would have flourished in important ways had his meeting with G. never occurred....

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

In Anti-Bolshevik Russia

by C. E. Bechhofer Roberts

THERE were the three of us in an old barn in Rostov-on-the-Don. Outside it was freezing; for that matter it had been freezing inside too the previous day, and would still have been but that by considerable luck and much aplomb we had managed to get some coal and stoke up a big fire. Zaharov, who was the rightful tenant of the barn—so far as anybody is the rightful tenant of a requisitioned room belonging to somebody else—had got a permit for the coal, made out, it is true, to another man from whom he had somehow obtained it. [Ouspiensky](#) [sic. Ouspensky], leaving the fourth dimension on one side for the occasion, had concocted the whole plan; and I, as the least occupied of the three, had been given the rather laborious job of presenting the permit at the coal depot, several miles out of the town, obtaining the coal (no easy task) and escorting it back to the barn. Anyhow we had the coal.

The fire had a wonderful effect on our spirits. It seemed to thaw them out, as well as our bodies. Living, as one did in Russia, from hour to hour, a good fire was a thing to make a fuss about. We found also a quantity of spirit in one of the cupboards in the barn, and despite Zaharov's protests, we proceeded to convert it into vodka with the addition of some orange peel. Ouspiensky told Zaharov that the rightful owner would never get back to Rostov in time to use it before the Bolsheviks came—a prophecy which proved to be accurate—and that, if we did not drink it, the Commissars would. So we began to drink it.

“People have been drinking since the beginning of the world,” remarked Ouspiensky suddenly, “but they have never found anything to go better with vodka than a salted cucumber.”

With which remark he entered upon a series of reminiscences of his life in Moscow in the happy days before the war, which sounded queerly when one contrasted them with the misery and privations he and everyone else were now enduring. There was nothing of the reactionary in Ouspiensky's praise of the good old days; his sister had died in prison as a political offender, and he himself had been no stranger to the revolutionary movement. One has to visit Russia, stay there a while and spend one's time with Russians, to understand what the last six years have meant for them. But I am interrupting Ouspiensky.

“It was when I was a young man in Moscow,” he was saying, “and my cousin once gave a party. We brewed the vodka together. It was a marvelous brew. There was one man there, the sort of type one only

sees in Russia; a young man with long hair, a long beard, long moustaches and a sad, far-away look in his eyes. Well, he had one glass of vodka, got straight up from his chair, walked out of the house and into the nearest hairdresser's. There he made them run the clippers all over his head, and shave him; he came out as bare of hair as an egg, and went straight home to bed. That shows you what good vodka can do!"

"Apropos, did you ever hear," he asked, "about the chief of police in this town just after the outbreak of the Revolution in 1917? His clerk found him sitting in his office one morning, with a pile of newspapers and proclamations in front of him. He was scratching his head in perplexity. 'Ye-es,' he said at last, 'I can understand that the proletariat of the world ought to unite; but why must they unite in Rostov-on-the-Don?'"

"To-night," remarked Zaharov, with equal gravity, "we shall have hot water. We shall be able to wash our faces, clean our teeth and indulge in all sorts of unaccustomed amusements."

"Don't interrupt me," said Ouspiensky. "I was remarking that every policeman in Moscow in the old days knew me by my Christian name, because, unlike most people, when I was drunk I always tried to resolve quarrels and not to start them. Besides, I used to give them big tips. And all the porters at the restaurants used to know me, and when there was a row on they used to telephone to me to come round and stop it. One night I remember I got home with the left sleeve of my overcoat missing. How I lost it, and where, I have never discovered, although I have given the matter very careful thought. Indeed, I once thought of writing a book about it."

"Well," said I, "where shall we be in a month's time, I wonder?"

They both turned on me. "It's clear," they said, "you've never lived under the Bolsheviks. If you had, you wouldn't ask that sort of question. You would acquire the sort of psychology that does not admit reflections of that kind."

"And yet," said Ouspiensky, "when I was under the Bolsheviks last year, I did once consider the future. I was at Essentuki in the North Caucasus. The Bolsheviks had requisitioned all the books in the place and taken them into the school there. I went to the Commissar and asked him to make me librarian. I had been schoolmaster there previously. You didn't know I had been a schoolmaster since the Revolution, did you? [He turned to me.] Yes, and I've been a house porter, too. Well the Commissar didn't quite know what a librarian was, but I explained to him. He was a simple man and began to be almost frightened of me when I told him that I had written books of my own. So he made me librarian and I put up a big notice on the door, saying that this was the Essentuki Soviet Library. My idea was to keep the books safe, without mixing them up, so that when the Bolsheviks went away they could be given back to their owners. I arranged them nicely, and spent my time reading some of them. Then one night the Cossacks came and drove the Bolsheviks out. I ran round to the school and tore down the word 'Soviet,' for fear the Cossacks would come and destroy everything; and so it read simple 'Essentuki Library.' And next day I started to hand the books back to their owners. Not a soul had been to the Library all the time, so no harm was done in breaking it up."

“Still,” said Zaharov, “Bechhofer’s question has a certain theoretical interest. I wonder where we shall be in a month’s time.”

“You may wonder as much as you like,” said Ouspiensky, “but you will never find better vodka than this.”

A month later I wrote the following entry in my diary:

“I can answer my own question now. I am at Novorossisk, writing this. Ouspiensky is, I believe, at Ekaterinodar, trying to get his wife away to the comparative safety of the shore; I do not know if I shall ever see him again, or where. Zaharov died three days ago of small-pox, contracted at Rostov at the very time when we were living with him. And the Bolsheviks are at Rostov.”

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The Romance and Mystery of Ouspensky's *Tertium Organum*

by Claude Bragdon

In the spring of 1918 there appeared at my door a young Russian, Nicholas Bessaraboff, bearing in his hand the Russian edition of *Tertium Organum*. He had determined that the book must be translated into English, and since his knowledge of the language was inadequate for the task, he asked my help. To this I readily agreed and we set to work almost immediately. Our method was this: he made a word-for-word translation of the Russian text, and when I had the meaning clear in my mind I expressed it in the best and simplest English I could command.

I had had some experience as a publisher, having issued my own books and others under my own imprint, and I therefore decided to follow the same procedure with *Tertium Organum*, as by these means I could keep more intimately in touch with those who bought and read the book....

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

NOT A CULT.

Dancing to Develop the Mind

by E. C. Bowyer

Ouspensky, a middle-aged, much-traveled and learned Russian who lives at West Kensington, is the chief missionary for Gurdjieff's strange academy in the Forest of Fontainebleau which has been described in the *Daily News*. Among well-known people deeply interested in the school are Mr. Algernon Blackwood, Mr. J. D. Beresford, Mr. [A. R. Orage](#), Mr. J. W. N. Sullivan, Mr. Middleton Murry, Dr. Maurice Nichol, and Lady Rothermere. By his lectures and books, Mr. Ouspensky hopes to attract a number of other distinguished students, but at present he is only attempting to appeal to a very limited circle....

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Strange Life of Ivan Osokin

Commentary by [John Pentland](#)

Although so deeply committed to writing that he often said, not altogether jokingly, that it was actually a part of his nature, P. D. Ouspensky was not a prolific author.

Only five major works exist and of these *Tertium Organum* (for many years a best-seller in America) and *A New Model of the Universe* were written and published in Russia before Ouspensky met Gurdjieff in Moscow in 1915. All the others represented his statements of Gurdjieff's teaching, and were published posthumously. With the exception of *In Search of the Miraculous*, which he worked over carefully and which was published under the authority of Gurdjieff himself, these later books were never intended by Ouspensky for public circulation. In spite of the invaluable contribution they make to Gurdjieff's teaching, they do less than justice to Ouspensky as a writer.

[Strange Life of Ivan Osokin](#) is an early work. Originally a novel but later rechristened "Cinemadrama" in the early days of films, Ouspensky himself set considerable store by it, perhaps because it was the only purely imaginative work by a mind that was rigorously honest in facing up to the usual abuses of human imagination....

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

In Search of the Miraculous

A Synopsis by Jacob Needleman

[The book](#) is written in the form of a personal account of Ouspensky's years with Gurdjieff, and the ideas of Gurdjieff are presented to some extent in their chronological sequence against the background of the conditions of life which Gurdjieff created for his pupils during the chaos and upheaval of pre-revolutionary Russia. In addition to being a faithful presentation of major aspects of the Gurdjieff teaching, the book thereby also provides much material about the life of Gurdjieff and the early history of what has now become known as "the work."

The book's form also allows Ouspensky to communicate to the reader what he clearly considers to be the necessary emotional correlates of these ideas. This is done with refreshing honesty and extraordinary skill—and in a variety of ways—often through Ouspensky's describing the difficulties he and others encountered in understanding an idea, or the shock when understanding finally appeared and, often, the sense of joy or urgency when realizing this was the great knowledge, the miraculous, of which one had dreamed, but that the demands it made upon the seeker were correspondingly awesome.

Great care is taken throughout the book to characterize the master-pupil relationship between Gurdjieff and his circle. The resulting picture of Gurdjieff is of a man obviously possessing immense wisdom and personal power, capable at once of painfully stripping away the pupil's "mask" while carefully guiding him through the emotional and bodily experiences necessary for the process of deep learning. The information and speculations which Ouspensky offers about the sources of Gurdjieff's knowledge and about his motivations for acting as he did in various situations, rather than satisfying the reader's curiosity about Gurdjieff, communicate instead the impression of an indecipherable man, doubtless one of the most enigmatic men of the twentieth century.

Finally, the form of the book allows Ouspensky to present the Gurdjieff ideas in a specific psychological sequence and in carefully selected juxtapositions without calling this strategy to the attention of the reader.

As for the contents of the book, it touches on nothing less than the whole of the vast Gurdjieffian philosophy, cosmology, psychology, and guidelines for living. Although the book's subtitle, "Fragments

of an Unknown Teaching,” is presumably meant to indicate that the connectedness between all the various ideas cannot be made intellectually explicit, but must be discovered through experience, and although from a certain point of view it must still be considered a preliminary treatment, nevertheless the impression of an awesomely comprehensive system of ideas is inescapable. What follows is necessarily an extremely truncated abstract.

Abstract

The author begins by describing his first meeting with Gurdjieff shortly after he, Ouspensky, had returned from India in search of a school of higher knowledge. To Ouspensky’s surprise, this man Gurdjieff, whom he is meeting in his native Russia, seems to possess that knowledge which Ouspensky had twice traveled around the world seeking. Moreover, Gurdjieff has organized a group, structured along unfamiliar but intriguing principles, to study this knowledge. There are esoteric schools, Gurdjieff tells him, but the first thing to realize is that a very special sort of knowledge is needed, even among esoteric teachings, in order for a man to have results corresponding to his full possibilities. And the first thing necessary is for a man to see how far in fact he is from these possibilities. Man, says Gurdjieff, is actually not a man, he is a machine. All the attributes of man—freedom, understanding, love, creativity—are not his until he works for them. Man can cease to be a machine; he can become conscious. But first he must see his complete mechanicalness. This is extremely difficult, and very few can wish for or bear to see the truth about themselves.

Conversations with Gurdjieff continue until gradually a group forms itself for the sake of studying and putting the ideas into practice. Man’s possibilities are very great, Gurdjieff tells them, greater than they can imagine. It is, he says, a question of actually forming within oneself something tangibly permanent, something higher and more real than the physical body which is all there is of ordinary man, no matter what he may imagine of himself. Gurdjieff presents to Ouspensky’s group the teaching about the soul that can be developed in man, and this is juxtaposed to Gurdjieff’s teaching about the aim of his work—namely, the development of *being* in man. Man *is* not; he is only a fragmented and veiled collection of personages masquerading as a real self. The real self must be formed through work, through a specific form of suffering, a discipline. Such discipline lies at the heart of the great traditions, but this path does not exist in the modern, Western world. At the same time, there can be several forms of this discipline, some quick and some slow, some suitable for modern man, some unsuitable.

Gurdjieff describes his teaching as representing the *fourth way*, not the way of bodily struggle (the way of the fakir), nor the way of purification of the emotions (the way of the monk), nor the way of purification of the mind (the way of the yogi). The fourth way works on all aspects of man at the same time, and requires no renunciation or belief. It can be and indeed must be practiced in the midst of ordinary life conditions. It is thus easier and faster, but also, in another sense, far more difficult than the traditionally recognized methods of self-development. The difficulty consists in its inherent newness—it can never be a culturally familiar form, but must always move at a different tempo from human culture or the normally recognized functions of reason; because it is the rapid path, it puts constant pressure upon the individual for seeing the truth about himself.

Gurdjieff also speaks about the absence of unity in another, more fundamental way which also points to the meaning, in this teaching, of man's potentially developed unity. The human structure, Ouspensky and his group learn, consists of several minds. These minds, or *centers* of perception, are the real structural elements of human nature and any attempts to bring man to unity that do not understand these centers are bound to fail.

At various points throughout the book, the subject of the centers (basically, the thinking center, the emotional center, and the moving-instinctive center), is treated and developed more and more until it becomes clear that the idea of the three centers in man is one of the most central ideas in the whole of the Gurdjieffian system. Man's confusion, his lack of unity, his unnecessary suffering, his immorality—in fact everything that characterizes the sorrow of the human condition—come about because these centers of perception are wrongly related, wrongly functioning, and because man does not see or care to know this about himself.

A characteristic of *In Search of the Miraculous*, which from all other accounts doubtless reflects the Gurdjieff teaching accurately, is the unique mingling of cosmological ideas with teachings concerning psychology. Ouspensky now begins the long, powerful portrayal of Gurdjieff's teachings about the origin and structure of the universe, the laws behind the appearances, laws and forces that govern everything from the creation of galaxies to the movements of atoms to the energy transactions within the human organism.

The two basic laws of reality are *the law of three forces* and *the law of the octave*. Every phenomenon in the universe is inevitably the manifestation of three forces; and every process takes place according to a structure symbolized by the familiar seven-tone musical scale, with steps either upward or downward and with junctures, or *intervals*, where the development of forces is checked and requires special new energy to proceed along its original path.

Ouspensky painstakingly states these ideas while taking every opportunity to quote Gurdjieff's dictum that the only way an individual can understand these cosmic laws is to observe them in himself, and this through the special forms of the work which are rapidly developing in the group of which Ouspensky is a member. Meanwhile, the reader is made aware that revolution and war are moving close; all around the madness of mankind is becoming more and more apparent.

Like the idea of the centers, once the ideas of the law of three forces and the law of the octave are introduced they become a permanent part of all future discussion. On their basis is built the whole of Gurdjieff's teachings about the levels and movement between levels in the universe, from the absolute through the systems of the stars, suns, and planets down to the earth and, finally, the moon. The ray of creation or chain of worlds is ruled by the same laws that govern the inner and outer life of man and everything in surrounding nature.

For all the vastness and complexity of the material based upon these laws, however, it soon becomes clear that the most essential issue to be understood is the relationship of these laws to the nearly insoluble

difficulty in which man finds himself—his prison of lies, fears, and self-deception, his state of *sleep*, and the need for him to begin the long and difficult work of awakening to himself and of developing in himself the powers and functions which are proper to man, the “crown of creation.”

There now proceeds a discussion of the structure of the human organism seen in the light of the universal laws of the transformation of energy. The food man eats, the air he breathes, and the impressions he experiences are intimately interconnected as forms by which energies are accepted into the organism and assimilated or rejected. This is the idea of the “three foods” of man, and much of the Gurdjieff teaching is understandable only on the basis of this idea—for example, the reason he places complete emphasis on consciousness as seeing, rather than on efforts of man to make changes in himself. The deepest and most important change of human nature comes about, according to Gurdjieff, through the assimilation of the energy of impressions, and this takes place through the work of awareness without dire efforts to make changes. This work of awareness, called here *self-remembering*, is the principal instrument by means of which man may accumulate the force necessary for the eventual manifestation in himself of the properties of will, creative intelligence, conscience, and the power to love.

A rather extensive description of the workings of a Gurdjieff group is now given and is connected to many essential and new ideas—for example, the idea that an esoteric school also is structured along the lines of cosmic law in all its aspects. The most crucial idea here, which has already been introduced but is now given a telling practical import, is Gurdjieff’s teaching about evolution. He uses this term in a way strikingly different from that of modern science and different also from its current use among followers of the new religions. According to Gurdjieff, there are two major forces in the universe—the force by which the absolute manifests, which is a movement from higher to lower, from simplicity to complexity; and a movement back toward the source, a movement upward, toward the unity of simplicity. The latter is evolution, the former involution.

Past a certain stage, evolution is not and cannot be automatic, mechanical; it requires special work and conscious discipline. It can only proceed through individual human beings working together. In short, the evolution of man is neither the mechanical, biological process of modern science, nor the social or planetary phenomenon of the contemporary “Aquarians.” The fascinating details of the structure of Gurdjieff groups that appear in this portion of Ouspensky’s book are more understandable when it is seen that human evolution requires extraordinary conditions of individual and collective effort, conditions which go against the grain of every known psychological, religious, or social organization.

In the latter half of the book numerous ideas are introduced which both amplify those already given and at the same time provide a completely new angle of vision on the whole system and which also seem an integral part of the whole. There is something about the intensity and underlying urgency with which this book is written that gives each portion the rather rare characteristic of seeming new on each reading, just as the whole system keeps being redefined over the course of Ouspensky’s years with Gurdjieff.

We are introduced to the idea of essence and personality, the division of human nature between what is man’s own and what he acquires; we learn of the existence and role of other centers besides the three

basic centers. One of the most dramatic and personal sections of the book occurs in this latter part—where Ouspensky vividly describes experiences of an inexplicable nature regarding his relationship with Gurdjieff, experiences or facts which Gurdjieff had promised him would eventually come. It is clear that Ouspensky in this case seeks to portray a personal state of consciousness which he believes is unlike anything in the known mystical literature of the world. More than anything else, however, personal relations described in this latter part of the book partake of a unique quality of feeling which may strike the reader as puzzling, even chilling, yet perhaps also as evidencing new possibilities of the reach of the human heart. Ouspensky's decision to leave his teacher, poignantly but tersely described toward the very end of the book, has this same ambiguity in the most extreme degree. Has Gurdjieff veered away from a certain right direction? Or has he brought Ouspensky to a stage of inner development which can only proceed further through the creation in the pupil of an entirely new and unknown human emotion?

Chief among the new ideas introduced in this portion of the book is the mysterious nine-pointed diagram known as the *Enneagram*. As explained by Ouspensky in several sections, it is an ancient symbol, never before made known, which represents the fundamental laws of transformation that have already been described in the whole of the book. It is thus *par excellence* Gurdjieff's diagram of the organic unity of everything existing: the law of three forces, the law of seven, the processes of assimilating the three "foods," the patterns governing the transmission of esoteric knowledge, and the structural dynamics of every living thing in nature, including the incomplete being, man, myself.

~ • ~

[Jacob Needleman](#) is Professor of Philosophy at San Francisco State University and the author of many influential books, including *The New Religions* (1970), *The Heart of Philosophy* (1982), *Money and the Meaning of Life* (1991, Rev. 1994). His most recent work is *Time and the Soul* (1998).

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

P. D. Ouspensky

A Brief Bibliography

by J. Walter Driscoll

Major Writings

Works published or prepared for publication by P. D. Ouspensky

Tertium Organum: The Third Canon of Thought, a Key to the Enigmas of the World. [Translated from the Russian by Nicholas Bessaraboff and Claude Bragdon.](#) Rochester, N.Y.: Manas Press, 1920, 344p.; New York: Knopf, 1922; London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1923, 1934; 3rd American edition, New York: Knopf, 1945, 306p. A revised English translation by Eugenic Kadloubovsky under Ouspensky's supervision, limited edition of 21 copies, Cape Town: Stourton Press, 1950, 192p. *An Abridgement of P. D. Ouspensky's 'Tertium Organum,'* by Fairfax Hall, Cape Town: Stourton Press, 1961, 276p.; revised translation by E. Kadloubovsky and the author, New York: Knopf, 1981, 298p., index.

Ouspensky's experimental efforts to enter higher states of consciousness proved to him that an entirely new mode of thought was needed by modern man, qualitatively different from the two modes (classical and positivistic) that have dominated Western civilization for 2000 years. *Tertium Organum* is a clarion call for such thought, ranging brilliantly over the teachings of Eastern and Western mysticism, sacred art and the theories of modern science. With the publication of *Tertium Organum* in Russian, in 1911, Ouspensky became a widely respected author and lecturer on metaphysical questions. The American translation of *Tertium Organum* in 1920, won him widespread recognition in England and America, where he lived from 1921.

A New Model of the Universe: Principles of the Psychological Method in Its Application to Problems of Science, Religion and Art. Translated from the Russian by R. R. Merton, under the supervision of the author. New York: Knopf, 1931; London: Routledge, 1931, 544p.; 2nd revised edition, London: Routledge, 1934; New York: Knopf; 1934; reprinted 1943, 1961, (Knopf) and 1971 (Random House), 476p.; London: Routledge, 1949, 534p.

A collection of twelve wide-ranging and penetrating essays dealing with esotericism, symbolism, science, religion, higher dimensions, evolution, superman, eternal recurrence and other topics that anticipate many of the most significant psycho-spiritual questions of the twentieth-century. Most of these extended essays were published separately in Russian before Ouspensky translated them to English and published this anthology in London in 1931 for the general purpose of attracting those interested in such questions.

Psychological Lectures: 1934–1940. Privately printed and distributed. London [1940], 90p., limited edition of 125 copies. Six introductory lectures, issued by Ouspensky's Historico-Psychological Society at 46 Colet Gardens in London. Posthumously published in five lectures as ***The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution.*** New York: Hedgehog Press, 1950, 98p.; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1951, 95p., index; New York: Knopf, 1954, 114p.; ***2nd edition enlarged*** [[with a preface](#) by John Pentland], New York: Knopf, 1974, 128p. (This edition contains a reprint of the article "Notes on the Decision to Work" and a previously unpublished autobiographical note.) London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978, 95p. (Contains Ouspensky's 1945 introduction.) ***3rd edition***, New York: Random House, 1981, 128p. (This edition contains a publisher's note in place of the introductory note written for the 2nd edition. The two selections added to the 2nd edition are replaced by a lecture of Sept. 23, 1937.)

These private introductory lectures were written, not for publication, but to provide Ouspensky's students with an account of the direction his work had taken since the publication of *Tertium Organum* and *A New Model of the Universe*. Ouspensky indicates in his 1945 introduction to these lectures, that they are an invitation to "follow the advice and indications given...which referred chiefly to self-observation and a certain self-discipline." Not simply a synopsis of the knowledge Ouspensky had learned from Gurdjieff, these deeply considered lectures present the author's struggle to transmit a living system in the hope of attracting the supportive attention of the same higher sources from whom Ouspensky believed Gurdjieff had received his teaching.

Strange Life of Ivan Osokin. Limited edition of 356 copies. London: Stourton, 1947, 179p.; New York and London: Holme, 1947, 166p.; London: Faber & Faber, 1948; New York, Hermitage House, 1955, 166p.; London: Faber & Faber, 1971, 204p.; Baltimore: Penguin, 1971 ("The Penguin Metaphysical Library" [reprinted with a foreword by J\[ohn\] P\[entland\]](#)), 1973, 204p.; New York: Arkana/Methuen, 1988, 162p.

Written in Russian in 1905 as a "cinema-drama," and first published as ***Kinemadrama*** (St. Petersburg, 1915), Ouspensky's novel is based on the theme of "eternal recurrence." It tells the story of how the young Ivan Osokin is unable to correct his past mistakes, even when given the chance to relive his life. The last chapter powerfully portrays a man's shock at the realization of his utter mechanicality and characterizes both the promise and the demand of an esoteric school.

In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949, 399p.; London: Routledge, 1949, 399p. Paperback edition, New York: Harcourt, Brace, no date [196?].

Ouspensky met Gurdjieff in Moscow in 1915. Undertaken in 1925, with Gurdjieff's approval and in progress for many years, parts of the manuscript were read to Ouspensky's groups in the 1930's but it remained unpublished at his death in 1947. It was brought to Gurdjieff's attention by Mme Ouspensky and with his encouragement, published in the Fall of 1949 as a precursor to *Beelzebub's Tales*. This book is the precise, clear result of Ouspensky's long work in recording in an honest and impersonal form these "Fragments of an Unknown Teaching" which he received from Gurdjieff. Remains unparalleled as a lucid and systematic account of Gurdjieff's early formulation of his ideas.

Notes and Archival Material

P. D. Ouspensky Memorial Collection. Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, Conn., Manuscript Group No. 840.

Fifty-four boxes of material that include typed transcripts of Ouspensky's meetings from 1921 to 1947, some of which were subsequently published as *The Fourth Way* (1957), *Conscience* (1979) *A Further Record* (1986) [These posthumous publications are cited below.] The Yale collection also contains manuscripts, translations and copies of his books, and two boxes of photographs and material about Ouspensky.

P. D. Ouspensky Memorial Collection: Manuscript Group 840. [An inventory] by Janet Elaine Gertz. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University, 1981, 9p.

Related Writings

Posthumous Publications And Adaptations

The Fourth Way: A Record of Talks and Answers to Questions Based on the Teaching of G. I. Gurdjieff. Prepared under the general supervision of Sophia Ouspensky. New York: Knopf, 1957, 446p.; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957, 446p., index; New York: Knopf, 1965, 446p., index; New York: Random House, 1971, 446p., index.

Conscience: The Search for Truth. Introduction by Merrily E. Taylor. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979, 159p. Contains five texts previously published in limited editions in the 1950s by Stourton Press (Cape Town): *Memory; Surface Personality; Self-Will; Negative Emotions and Notes on Work.*

A Further Record Chiefly of Extracts from Meetings Held by P. D. Ouspensky between 1928 and 1945. Privately printed limited edition of 20 copies. Cape Town: Stourton Press, 1952, 347p., index. (Copy in the P. D. Ouspensky Collection, Yale.) Subsequently published as ***A Further Record: Extracts from Meetings 1928–1945.*** London and New York: Arkana, 1986, 318p., index

These three posthumous collections, *The Fourth Way*, *Conscience* and *A Further Record*, offer selections of Ouspensky's talks and answers to questions, transcribed at private meetings in England and the United States, from 1931 to 1946. These are edited and arranged to elucidate the ideas Ouspensky was transmitting on 'the system.'

Autobiographical Fragment. Written in 1935, this brief sketch was first published in the second enlarged edition of his *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution* (1974) Knopf, then in *Remembering Pytor Demianovich Ouspensky* (1978) a brochure compiled and edited by Merrily E. Taylor for Yale University Library. It was subsequently issued as an appendage to *A Further Record: Extracts from Meetings, 1928–1945 Q.V.* (1986) Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Ouspensky sketches his childhood, family, early studies, travel, the development of his philosophy and his relationship with Gurdjieff.

Adaptations

In Search of the Miraculous. Read by Laurence Rosenthal. Berkeley, California: Audio Literature, 1994. One 90 minute cassette audio tape abridged from the Harcourt Brace, 1949 edition.

In Search of the Miraculous: fragments of an unknown teaching. A film directed by Zivko Nolic, script adaptation by Milan Peters, based on the book by P. D. Ouspensky. Fairway Films (Sydney, Australia) in association with Znak Productions in Belgrade, 1998, 42 min. black & white.

Effectively telescopes Ouspensky's book, glimpses of the teaching he received from Gurdjieff and a brief characterization of their difficult relationship, into 42 minutes of film interspersed with archival footage of Russia and the Revolution. The ending focuses on Katherine Mansfield's appreciative soliloquy about Gurdjieff's Institute at Fontainebleau, as reported by Ouspensky.

Material about P. D. Ouspensky

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Butkovsky-Hewitt, Anna

With Gurdjieff in St. Petersburg and Paris. With the assistance of Mary Cosh and Alicia Street. New York: Weiser, 1978, 157p.

Henderson, Linda Dalrymple

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Freemantle, Christopher

“Ouspensky.” in *Man, Myth and Magic: An Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Supernatural* [first published as a weekly serial]. London: Pinell, 1972, pp. 2092–2093; 12 vols., revised, Freeport, N. Cavendish, [1982], 3268p.

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God is My Adventure: A Book on Modern Mystics, Masters and Teachers. London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1935, 426p.; New York: Knopf, 1936, 411p., bib.; London: Faber and Faber, 1941, 255p.; London: Allen and Unwin, 1964.

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[“Black Sheep Philosophers: Gurdjieff—Ouspensky—Orage”](#) *Tomorrow* (New York) XI (6), Feb. 1950, pp. 20–25.

Nott, C. S.

Further Teachings of Gurdjieff: Journey Through This World. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; (1969) New York: Samuel Weiser, 1969.

Priestley, J. B.

Man and Time. London: Aldus Books, 1964, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964, 319p.; New York: Dell, 1968, 319p., index.

Seton, Marie

“The Case of P. D. Ouspensky.” *Quest* (Calcutta) No. 34, July/Sept. 1962, pp. 36–44.

Taylor, Merrily E.

[Remembering Pyotr Demianovich Ouspensky.](#) Compiled and edited by Merrily E. Taylor. New Haven: Yale University Library, 1978, 45p.

Walker, Kenneth

Venture with Ideas. London: Jonathan Cape, 1951, 192p.; New York: Pellegrini & Cudahy, 1952, 212p.; New York: Weiser, 1972, 192p.; *2nd edition, revised.* London: Luzac Oriental, 1995, 160p.

The Making of Man. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963, 163p., index.

Webb, James

The Harmonious Circle: The Lives and Work of G. I. Gurdjieff, P. D. Ouspensky, and Their Followers. New York: Putnam's, 1980, 608p.; London: Thames & Hudson, 1980; Boston: Shambhala, 1987.

Two Authors Particularly Influenced by Ouspensky

These are representative works by Ouspensky's two most prominent pupils. While they contain no overt discussion of Ouspensky, their inspiration and framework clearly show his profound influence. Interested readers may want to explore the larger body of Nicoll's and Collin's work.

Nicoll, Maurice

Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky. 5 Volumes. 1766p. (continuous pagination). London: Vincent Stuart, Vols. 1–2–3, 1954, 1964. Vols. 4–5, 1966, 1968.; 5 Vols. Reprinted, Boulder: Shambhala, 1984.; York Beach: Weiser, 1996, 6 Individually paged volumes including a 216 p. index.

The New Man: An Interpretation of Some Parables and Miracles of Christ. London: Stuart & Richard, 1950, 152p.; New York: Hermitage House, 1951; with a foreword by Jacob Needleman, Baltimore: Penguin, 1972, 184p.; London: Watkins, 1981, 153p.

Living Time and the Integration of the Life. London: Vincent Stuart, 1952, 252p., index, bib.; New York: Hermitage House, 1952, 252 p., London: Watkins, 1976, 252p., New York: Weiser,[no date.]; Utrecht: Eureka Editions, 1998, 294p., index, bib.

Collin [Smith], Rodney

The Theory of Eternal Life. London: Privately printed [1950]: Cape Town: Stourton Press, 1950: London: Vincent Stuart, 1956; London: Stuart & Watkins, 1968, 126p.; Robinson & Watkins, 1974, [134p,.]; Boston: Shambhala, 1984, 126p.

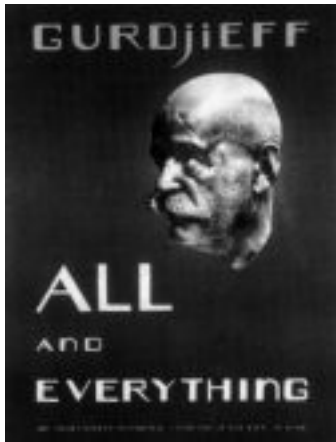
The Theory of Celestial Influence: Man, the Universe, and Cosmic Mystery. London: Vincent Stuart, 1954, 392p., index; New York: Weiser, 1973, 393p.; Boston: Shambhala, 1984, 392p.; London & New York: Arkana, 1993, 392p.

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Revision: January 1, 1999



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Gurdjieff's Theory of Art

by [Dr. Anna Challenger](#)

**“We gave advice in its proper place,
Spending a lifetime in the task.
If it should not touch anyone's ear of desire,
The messenger told his tale, it is enough.”**

*Muslih-uddin Sa'di
13th c. Sufi poet
The Rose Garden*

Because literature for Gurdjieff, as for the Sufis, is inextricable from philosophy, it is appropriate in considering *Beelzebub's Tales* to address some fundamental philosophical questions, the answers to which help put Gurdjieff's writings into perspective. Among the issues to be addressed, one of primary importance is to define what constitutes literature for Gurdjieff, or what, according to his aesthetics, distinguishes literature from non-literature; art from non-art....

[The complete text is available in the [printed copy](#) of this issue.]

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Revision: January 1, 2000

Gurdjieff

International Review

Spring 1999 Issue, Vol. II No. 3

A Focus on Historical Essays

Editorial Introduction

This issue contains several historical essays by some of the students of Gurdjieff and his teaching, including those of J. G. Bennett, A. R. Orage, John Pentland, Louise Welch, A. L. Staveley, and others.

Gurdjieff's All and Everything A Study by J. G. Bennett

Bennett's study was first published in *Rider's Review* (Autumn 1950), London, and is reprinted here with the kind permission of [Bennett Books](#). Bennett grapples with the contradiction of trying to elucidate a "book that defies verbal analysis" and concludes that *Beelzebub's Tales* is an epoch-making work that represents the first new mythology in 4000 years. He finds in Gurdjieff's ideas regarding time, God's purpose in creating the universe, conscience, and the suffering of God, a synthesis transcending Eastern and Western doctrines about humanity's place in the cosmos.

John G. Bennett: The Struggle to "Make Something" for Oneself

George Bennett (John Bennett's son) recounts the different influences that shaped his father's search. He recognizes the life-long impact Ouspensky and particularly Gurdjieff had on John Bennett and describes how Gurdjieff's influence shaped the



"the type of verbal formula used by Gurdjieff in All and Everything corresponds precisely to what is regarded by many as the highest ideal of language, in which the meaning of an expression is created by the compulsion of inner experience. In Gurdjieff's hands, this form of language acquires a devastating power."

"From the cosmic drama there emerges the miraculous destiny to which man is called if he is willing to pay the price. Since the Universe itself is a perpetual striving, the highest destiny of man is no static beatitude, but the undying fulfillment of an everlasting purpose."

J. G. Bennett

groups Bennett led during the last twenty-five years of his life.

[The 100 Most Influential Books Ever Written](#) [A Review by J. Walter Driscoll](#)

Walter Driscoll reviews Martin Seymour-Smith's last book, *The 100 Most Influential Books Ever Written: The History of Thought from Ancient Times to Today*. Driscoll observes that "Each of the 100 reviews provides a historical background, an overview of the text, the author, and the factors determining the significance of a particular book, as well as analysis of why the book is of enduring significance today. His compilation provides a truly liberal education, especially for independent readers studying outside the shelter of academe."

[The 100 Most Influential Books Ever Written](#) [Chapter 94: Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson](#)

Chapter 94 from *The 100 Most Influential Books Ever Written: The History of Thought from Ancient Times to Today* by Martin Seymour-Smith is reproduced in its entirety with the kind permission of Carol Publishing Group. Seymour-Smith points out that Gurdjieff's doctrine is "the most convincing fusion of Eastern and Western thought that has yet been seen..."

[Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson](#) [Commentary by A. L. Staveley](#)

This commentary was first published in 1993 as dust jacket notes for the [Two Rivers Press](#) facsimile reprinting of the English (1950) first edition of *Beelzebub's Tales* and is reproduced with the kind permission of Two Rivers Press. Mrs. Staveley comments that "This Book is a guide to becoming a real man. Gurdjieff advised us to read, reread and then read this Book again many, many times. Read it aloud with others and

"The first important thing to note about this [Gurdjieff's] doctrine is that there is, explicitly, no room at all for anyone in it who does not approach it itself in a truly critical and skeptical spirit."

Martin Seymour-Smith

"Gurdjieff's work, his teaching, is not meant for everyone—neither is his Book for everyone. Both the teaching and the Book are meant for those who can and will use them."

A. L. Staveley

"The laws which enable the universe to come into being spontaneously seem themselves to be the product of exceedingly ingenious design. If physics is the product of design, the universe must have a purpose, and the evidence of modern physics suggest strongly to me that the purpose includes us."

Paul Davies

"I beg myself as well as my readers not to mistake understanding for attainment; and not to imagine, on the strength of their realization of certain truths, that they possess them, or still less, that they can use them. Our being, in which alone truth is possessed, is still a

read it to yourself. Even if you read it thirty, even fifty times, you will always find something you missed before—a sentence which gives with great precision the answer to a question you have had for years.”

Superforce and Beelzebub

[Sample Only]

Jyri Paloheimo reviews Paul Davies’ *Superforce: The Search for a Grand Unified Theory of Nature* and takes issue with the popular notion that the current science of physics is yet one more Way in harmony with Eastern teachings. In so doing, he draws on *Beelzebub’s Tales* as a source and synthesis of ancient wisdom traditions which are rooted in the idea that the universe has a purpose. This essay was originally published in *A Journal of Our Time* No. 4, 1986 (Toronto) and is reproduced with the kind permission of the author and of the publisher Bob McWhinney.

A. R. Orage: An Introduction by Louise Welch

Louise Welch, author of *Orage with Gurdjieff in America* (1982) was in Orage’s New York Gurdjieff group and was uniquely qualified to write about him. This thoughtful introduction was written for the compilation, *On Love and three essays from the Notebook of A. R. Orage*, which she edited. It was privately published in a limited edition of 200 copies in 1969 by the Society for Traditional Studies (Toronto) and is reproduced with the kind permission of the publisher Bob McWhinney.

A. R. Orage’s My Note Book (October 1933)

[Sample Only]

Between October 1933 and October 1934, A. R. Orage published in *The Aryan Path* (Bombay) a series of four essays containing a diary of his mature thoughts on a variety of subjects and books. In this first essay, Orage examines the unfortunate alienation that developed between the Aryan

long way behind our understanding.”

“A man can only think as deeply as he feels.”

A. R. Orage

“According to Ouspensky, love is the potent force which tears off all masks, and men who run away from love do so that they may preserve their masks.”

Claude Bragdon

“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.”

Marie Seton

“In these chapters [The Theory of Celestial Influence], one feels that Collin’s aim is to join modern man’s central interest in the scientific world to his subtler and until now largely orphaned wish to ponder the great meaning of the cosmos and his place in it.”

Anonymous

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cultures of Europe and India because of the pedantic translations through which Indian literature and aesthetics were introduced to Europe. He regrets that Indian culture is regarded as at all exotic and compares the principles of psychology and literature exemplified in both cultures.

A. R. Orage's *My Note Book* (January 1934) **[Sample Only]**

Using analogies, Orage comments on: Modern Knowledge and Ancient—Disappearance of Soul—Science—Coins—Conventional and Intrinsic Values—The Absolutely Intrinsic forever Unknowable—Bio-Chemistry in 600 A. D.—Men and Things Radio-Active.

A. R. Orage's *My Note Book* (April 1934) **[Sample Only]**

Orage further comments on: Blinds and Breathing—A Respectful Suggestion to Gandhiji—Life, Nature and Art—Western Materialism an Ancient School—Leisure and Yoga—Kali-yuga and Man.

A. R. Orage's *My Note Book* (October 1934) **[Sample Only]**

These final entries of Orage's diary record his mature thoughts on: The Myth of Progress—Understanding and Attainment—The Self Is or Is Not—Men on Earth and Divine Purpose—Free Will, Fact or Fiction?—Physicists and Psychologists. Orage died on the night of November 5, 1934.

Ouspensky on Love **[Sample Only]**

This review by Claude Bragdon of the first edition of *Tertium Organum* by P. D. Ouspensky is excerpted from *The Messenger*, Vol. VII (10), March 1920. Several revisions of

Tertium Organum have been published since then—the most recent by Alfred A. Knopf in 1981.

The Case of P. D. Ouspensky

[Sample Only]

This article by Marie Seton was first published in *Quest* (Calcutta) No. 34, July/Sept. 1962. The author, a writer and translator who knew Russian, was Ouspensky's secretary and confidante during the 1940s in New York. Although grateful to him for what he taught her, and convinced of his goodness and honesty, she writes pointedly of how she saw the role of guru as a corrupting influence on him during that period.

The Theory of Celestial Influence

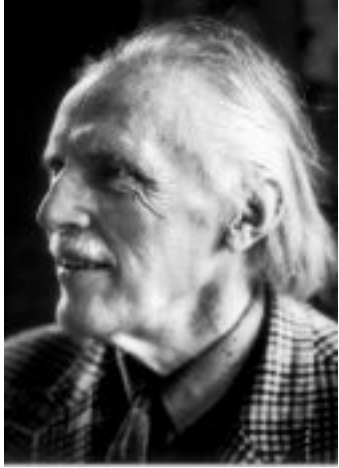
by Rodney Collin

[Sample Only]

An anonymous commentary first published in *Material for Thought* (1977) San Francisco: Number 7 and reissued here with the kind permission of the editors. The reviewer characterizes this book as Collin's monumental attempt to reconstruct what he received from his teacher, P. D. Ouspensky. The author points out that while some of the analogies which Collin employs in his attempt to reconcile scientific, religious and astrological cosmologies "seem naive; some are breathtaking in the range of vision they suggest."

Gurdjieff Obituary — The Times

This obituary of Gurdjieff was printed in *The Times* (November 12, 1949), London. An astute reporter reflects that Gurdjieff, "Having reached the conviction that his researches had led him to a valid conception of the meaning of human existence, and having discovered methods, some ancient, others new, for the development of the powers latent in the human psyche, founded in 1910 in Moscow the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man."



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Gurdjieff's *All and Everything*

A Study by [J. G. Bennett](#)

September 1950

[Ouspensky](#) records a conversation in St. Petersburg during the summer of 1916 in which Gurdjieff discussed the problem of communication, and the impossibility of conveying in our ordinary language ideas which are intelligible and obvious only for a higher state of consciousness. Speaking of the unity between man, the Universe, and God, he said that the objective knowledge by which alone this unity is to be understood can never be expressed in words or logical forms. At this point, Gurdjieff made a statement which is a key to the understanding of his own subsequent writings. He said:

Realising the imperfection and weakness of ordinary language, the people who have possessed objective knowledge have tried to express the idea of unity in 'myths,' in 'symbols,' and in particular 'verbal formulas,' which, having been transmitted without alteration, have carried on the idea from one school to another, often from one epoch to another.¹

In [All and Everything](#) Gurdjieff makes extensive use of these three forms, that is, symbol, myth, and verbal formula. There is no need in these mathematical days to defend the use of symbolism. It is regarded by many schools of modern thought as the only safe form of language. Wittgenstein² treats symbols as something more than conventional signs, and regards them as corresponding in some way to the reality to which they refer. He would probably accept Gurdjieff's dictum that:

symbols not only transmit knowledge but show the way to it.³

Even though other thinkers deny any objective reference to symbols, no one questions that symbolism has a power beyond that of ordinary language. It is different with the language of myth. This is despised by superficial thinkers, but the greatest philosophers have known its value. Whitehead wrote:

The father of European philosophy, in one of his many moods of thought, laid down the axiom that the deeper truths must be adumbrated by myths. Surely the subsequent history of Western thought has amply justified his fleeting intuition.⁴

Toynbee follows Plato's lead and says:

Let us shut our eyes for the moment to the formulae of Science in order to open our ears to the language of Mythology.⁵

He attributes the value of mythological images to the fact that they are not embarrassed by the contradictions that arise when statements about ultimate reality are translated into logical terms. Even Cassirer, an arch priest of mathematical language, regards mythical thinking as one of the a priori forms in which the human mind operates, and an irreducible way of interpreting experiences.⁶

All these statements are true, but perhaps not quite as their authors understand them. The language of myth derives its supreme power from the fact that it unites what are hopelessly divorced in logical thinking: the inner world of human experience and the outer world which we call the Universe.

The importance of 'verbal formulas' as a means of conveying objective truths has been overlooked by modern thinkers, with the possible exception of Whitehead, and yet the type of verbal formula used by Gurdjieff in *All and Everything* corresponds precisely to what is regarded by many as the highest ideal of language, in which the meaning of an expression is created by the compulsion of inner experience. In Gurdjieff's hands, this form of language acquires a devastating power.

I have started to write about *All and Everything* in this way, because it is, in one aspect, an experiment in linguistic form. Gurdjieff uses every linguistic device from abstract symbolism to myth, from aphorism to pictorial image, from the simplicity and directness of Early English to the reiteration and exuberance of the East. But the linguistic form is always the means and not the end. There is, therefore, special importance in the form of language which he uses to express what Whitehead calls 'the deeper truths.'

In the reviews of the book which have appeared, *All and Everything* has usually been described as a cosmological epic or allegory. This disregards the distinction between allegory and myth.⁷ Allegory is a weaker and more sophisticated form of expression than myth. It belongs to our ordinary language, in which only relative ideas can be expressed. The myths which to this day are the symbolic forms of our deeper thinking, have existed since the dawn of history. Toynbee has said that no genius has arisen in the last four thousand years capable of creating a new myth. This amounts to saying that for forty centuries, mankind has not discovered a new approach to 'the deeper truths.'

I believe this to be right, and it is a measure of the place which I would assign to Gurdjieff's work in the history of human thought that I find in *All and Everything* a new mythology, the power of which will only be understood by generations yet unborn.

It is not surprising that Gurdjieff's writings have been ridiculed and misunderstood by the very people who profess to desire above all else that a new spiritualising factor should enter human life. With prophetic vision, Albert Schweitzer nearly fifty years ago wrote:

What the ultimate goal towards which we are moving will be, what this something is which shall bring new life and new regulative principles to coming centuries, we do not know. We can only dimly divine that it will be the mighty deed of some mighty original genius, whose truth and rightness will be proved by the fact that we, working at our poor half thing, will oppose him might and main—we who imagine we long for nothing more eagerly than a genius powerful enough to open up with authority a new path for the world, seeing that we cannot succeed in moving it forward along the track which we have so laboriously prepared.⁸

Having said so much I might be excused for refusing to go further. If Gurdjieff has said what cannot be expressed in ordinary language, it would be folly to attempt a translation. This is true, and those who have studied *All and Everything* for many years, in the manuscript form in which it has been available to his own immediate pupils, know very well that he has dealt lightly with the reader in his "Friendly Advice" to read the book thrice in order to obtain from it that specific benefit "which I wish for you with all my being." Even with long study, the deeper truths of Gurdjieff's teaching remain untranslatable without impoverishment.

Unfortunately I have already gone too far and cannot evade the challenge to explain what I mean in asserting that Gurdjieff has said something new which is not expressed in the myths or philosophies of the last four thousand years. Toynbee has said with reason that the language of mythology avoids the logical contradictions inherent in every account of the relations between God and the Universe:

In logic, if God's Universe is perfect there cannot be a Devil outside it, while, if the Devil exists, the perfection which he comes to spoil must have been incomplete already through the very fact of his existence.⁹

Toynbee rightly conceives some kind of Devil as necessary for the process of creation, but remains involved in the dualism of good and evil, of conflicting wills, of antithetical purposes. This conflict is inherent in all our myths, from the Chinese Yin-Yang and *The Book of Job* to Goethe's *Faust* and the modern myth of dialectical materialism. Dualism remains imbedded in all our thought. Even Whitehead, who rejects what he calls the "vicious dualism of Decartes," the "bifurcation of Nature," holds that:

Throughout the Universe there reigns the union of opposites which is the ground of dualism.¹⁰

Gurdjieff specifically rejects the myth of good and evil. He puts in its place a Creation myth in which the very existence of the Universe is subject to overriding and determining conditions which make the complete realisation of the Divine Purpose inherently impossible. The fact of successive actualisation in

Time imposes on every process the price of incompleteness and imperfection. This is the Merciless Heropass which:

has no source from which its arising should depend, but like 'Divine-Love' flows always ... independently by itself.¹¹

For Gurdjieff, Time has at once the absolute character of the Scholium to Definition VIII of Newton's *Principia*,¹² and also the disruptive tendency of the second Law of Thermodynamics, which according to Eddington:

holds the supreme position among the laws of Nature.¹³

In Gurdjieff's myth the Heropass is vanquished by the infinite wisdom of the Creator, not as an enemy or opposing principle, but rather as an ineluctable fact, the very condition of the possibility of existence. From this follows the Trogoautoegocratic principle, according to which the permanent harmony of the Universe is assured by the reciprocal feeding of everything that exists. I think that this conception was dimly sensed by the authors of the older *Upanishads*, and in the Serpent myths of many races, but it has never been understood as the sole remedy against the destructive power of Time.

In Gurdjieff's myth, the Universe comes into existence to ensure the perpetual self-renewal of the Most Holy Sun Absolute or First Principle. This conception is so necessary for the understanding of human destiny that Gurdjieff in his final chapter, "From the Author," translates it into ordinary language. Everything that lives must serve the "all-universal purposes." Man is not exempt from this necessity, and must, either by his life or by this death, contribute his quota to the transformation of energy upon which the reciprocal maintenance of all existence depends:

But at the same time Great Nature has given him the possibility of being not merely a blind tool of the whole of the entire service to these all-universal objective purposes but, while serving Her and actualising what is foreordained for him—which is the lot of every breathing creature—of working at the same time also for himself, for his own egoistic individuality.

This possibility was given also for service to the common purpose, owing to the fact that, for the equilibrium of these objective laws, such relatively liberated people are necessary.

Although the said liberation is possible, nevertheless whether any particular man has the chance to attain it—this is difficult to say.¹⁴

Man has thus a two-fold destiny, either to live only as the unconscious slave of the all-universal purpose, or to pay the debt of his own existence and thus attain independent individuality, with all that this brings of further possibilities of self-perfecting. In Gurdjieff's teaching of human destiny, there is the

fundamental religious conception of man as a being in need of salvation. Salvation, moreover, is only possible through redemption from Above. While thus preserving the conceptions which are common to all the great religions, Gurdjieff presents them in a new and penetrating form. To mention one example only, I would say that his doctrine of Original Sin, expressed in the myth of the organ Kundabuffer, is more profoundly satisfying than anything to be found in the theologies of the East or the West. This recalls the avowed purpose of *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*, namely:

To destroy, mercilessly, without any compromises whatsoever, in the mentation and feelings of the reader, the beliefs and views, by centuries rooted in him, about everything existing in the world.¹⁵

Superficially, *All and Everything* is a cruel satire upon human nature. It exposes ruthlessly our age-old weaknesses of vanity, credulity and self-love. In his descriptions of modern life, Gurdjieff draws directly upon his own penetrating observations of forty years of travel in every continent and most countries. His combination of wit and compassion enables him to speak of the intimate absurdities of our private lives in a way that will offend only those who do not wish to face the truth. To what does all this lead? Rejecting the dualism of good and evil, Gurdjieff has to put in its place some ultimate regulating principle of universal validity. This brings us to one recurrent theme of the book that defies verbal analysis. It is Gurdjieff's doctrine of the "Sacred Impulse of Divine Conscience."

Gurdjieff is concerned with arousing the conviction, not only that there is something terribly wrong with "our ordinary being existence," but also that there is a way out—to a life more becoming to beings "created in the image of God." The attentive reader cannot help feeling that he is in the presence of someone who has himself penetrated to this better world, and knows the means for attaining it. As one studies the book, there emerges the idea, which becomes a conviction, that the path of what Gurdjieff calls "conscious labour and intentional suffering" can indeed lead to imperishable being and the hope of reunion with the Prime Source of Everything Existing.

In *All and Everything* Gurdjieff makes no attempt to prove anything, that is to say, he uses no logical arguments, nor does he even explain the meaning of his most important assertions. This meaning can often be found only by confronting passages from several different contexts. In many cases the meaning of words only begins to take shape when the situations to which they correspond have been directly experienced. How then can the mere reading of the book arouse the conviction that its fundamental thesis is true? A great, though not the sole part, is played by the 'verbal formulas' which, according to Gurdjieff, are one of the elements of objective language.

This applies especially to Gurdjieff's doctrine of Conscience. He sets up the "Sacred Impulse of Divine Conscience" as the sole regulating principle of conduct. It is the antithesis of morality, which is no more than a system of external rules having only local and transient significance. Of morality, he says that it has:

exactly that 'unique property' which belongs to the being bearing the name 'chameleon.'¹⁶

The very idea of Objective Conscience defies analysis. It is as dangerous as it is powerful. Institutional religion rejects inner self-judgement in favor of moral principles and rules of conduct not merely to secure thereby a better hold upon their followers; there is a genuine danger that the idea of Conscience may degenerate into self-sufficiency and license. Gurdjieff meets the challenge with the formula of Ashiata Shiemash:

Only-he-will-be-called-and-will-become-the-Son-of-God-who-acquires-in-himself-Conscience.¹⁷

This formula is treated as axiomatic, that is, requiring neither explanation nor argument. Its meaning is conveyed by Gurdjieff's emphasis upon the character of the inner change which must be wrought in man before he is fit and able to live by the dictates of conscience alone. In one sense, the whole of *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* is a commentary upon the doctrine of Conscience, for it depicts the process of its arising in Beelzebub's grandson Hassein, from the 7th Chapter, when he first catches a glimpse of the meaning of duty, to the 46th Chapter, in which his understanding of the universal laws blends with an overwhelming compassion towards the sufferings of mankind.

Conscience and compassion are inseparable. The legomonism of Ashiata Shiemash, called "The Terror of the Situation," contains the quintessence of Gurdjieff's teaching about human life on earth. If man is to achieve his highest destiny, he must purge himself of the taint of Original Sin expressed as the consequences of the organ Kundabuffer. For this he must work and struggle and suffer, but whence is the urge for this work to arise?

Orthodox religion replies that it must come from the Sacred Impulses of Faith, Love, and Hope. Yet the history of mankind has shown that these impulses are ineffectual against the forces of egoism, vanity, self-love, suggestibility, and the rest, which ruin every good undertaking to which man sets his hand. Faith, Hope, and Love are so distorted that they can no longer serve as impulses towards self-perfecting. Gurdjieff teaches that there is one, and only one, sacred impulse remaining unspoiled, deep in the human psyche. This is the Sacred Impulse of Conscience, which cannot be destroyed. It is implanted by Divine Grace. Concerning this, with characteristic delicacy of touch, Gurdjieff exposes in one sentence his doctrine of the Suffering of God:

The factors for the being-impulse conscience arise in the presences of the three-brained beings from the localization of the particles of the "emanations-of-the-sorrow" of our omnivorous and long-suffering-endless-creator; that is why the source of the manifestation of genuine conscience in three-centered beings is sometimes called the representative of the creator.¹⁸

The doctrine of compassion is contained in another verbal formula which states the condition prerequisite for the process of self-purification by which a being can become worthy to be re-united with the Prime Source of Everything Existing. Purgatory is represented as a state of existence possible only for beings

who have already acquired independent individuality, and perfected themselves to such a gradation of objective reason that they can pass in their experience beyond the limitations of the planetary system in which they were born. But these qualifications are not enough. Neither the inward strength of the fully-liberated individual, nor his aspiration towards ultimate perfection, are sufficient; without compassion towards other beings, further progress is impossible. All this is expressed in a verbal formula consisting of the words placed over the chief entrance of the Holy Planet Purgatory, decreeing the following:

Only he may enter here who puts himself in the position of the other results of my labours.¹⁹

From this, we come to the ‘concluding chord’ in the last chapter, “From the Author,” where:

each one of us must set for his chief aim to become in the process of our collective life a master. But not a master in that sense and meaning which this word conveys to contemporary people ... but in the sense that a given man, thanks to his, in the objective sense, devout acts towards those around him—that is to say, acts manifested by him according to the dictates of his pure Reason alone ... acquires in himself that something which of itself constrains all those about him to bow before him and with reverence carry out his orders.²⁰

The ultimate satisfaction for man is the knowledge that he has paid the debt of his own existence, and is free thereafter to serve the purposes for which he was created. This does not imply that life for Gurdjieff is reduced to a bleak self-denial. Real happiness for man is possible at every stage of his existence, but there is a warning formula:

Every real happiness for man can arise exclusively only from some unhappiness, also real, which he has already experienced.²¹

There is nothing novel about the contents of this formula. What is new and necessary for our time is the emphasis upon the inevitability of payment; Gurdjieff insistently taught that the only true wisdom is to pay in advance. In writing of Gurdjieff’s verbal formulas, I have wandered from the task of stating what I mean by asserting that Gurdjieff has created a new mythology.

In detail, there is little new. Not much research is needed to discover the affinity of Gurdjieff’s cosmology with Neo-Platonism in the West and Sankhya and the Abhidharma in the East. It is easy to show where he has drawn upon Christian (especially Greek Orthodox), Buddhist (chiefly Mahayana and Zen), Moslem (particularly Dervish and Sufi), and Ancient Egyptian and Assyrian sources. The originality of his teaching does not lie in its raw material but in the use to which it is put. His Creation myth is that of a Universe which is the scene of a striving necessary to the Deity. It is permeated through and through with the consequences of the simple fact of successive actualisation in Time. In writing these words, I am forcibly reminded of Alexander’s *Space, Time and Deity*,²² and a comparison of the two books is indeed a demonstration of the immeasurable superiority of the language of myth and verbal

formula over that of logical analysis, even when inspired by a poetic imagination. What is missing in writers like McTaggart,²³ Alexander and Whitehead is the feeling that the suffering and the striving of the Universe really matter.

With Gurdjieff, the drama of the Universe becomes a present living reality. Involution and evolution are neither good nor evil,²⁴ neither in opposition nor even complimentary to one another. They are equally necessary for the Divine Purposes. They are woven together by the reciprocal feeding of all existence, which is neither evolution nor involution. Here and everywhere Gurdjieff's mythology is through and through triadic, and not dualistic. The problems of man, the Universe, and God are resolved in terms of a real mutual need for which philosophy has not hitherto found an adequate expression. From the cosmic drama there emerges the miraculous destiny to which man is called if he is willing to pay the price. Since the Universe itself is a perpetual striving, the highest destiny of man is no static beatitude, but the undying fulfillment of an everlasting purpose.

Notes

¹ P. D. Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous*, 1949, p. 279.

² Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 1922.

³ *In Search of the Miraculous*, p. 280.

⁴ A. N. Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 1938, p. 14.

⁵ Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, [in 12 Vols. 1934–1961], Vol. I, p. 271.

⁶ E. Cassirer, *Die Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen*, Bd. II, pp. 107–111.

⁷ See the admirable discussion of this distinction by Dorothy Emmet, in *The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking*, Macmillan, 1946, p. 100.

⁸ Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 1906, p. 6.

⁹ A. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Vol. I, p. 279.

¹⁰ A. N. Whitehead, *The Adventures of Ideas*, 1933, p. 245.

¹¹ *All and Everything*, 1950, p. 124.

¹² Isaac Newton, *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, 1687.

¹³ Sir A. Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World*, 1929, p. 74.

¹⁴ *All and Everything*, 1950, p. 1219.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. V, where Gurdjieff unequivocally states his purpose in each of the three series of *All and Everything*.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 343.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 368.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 372.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 1164.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 1236.

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 377.

²² Samuel Alexander, *Space, Time and Deity*, 2 Vols., 1920.

²³ John McTaggart Ellis, Cambridge atheistic idealist, best known for *Mind*, 1908.

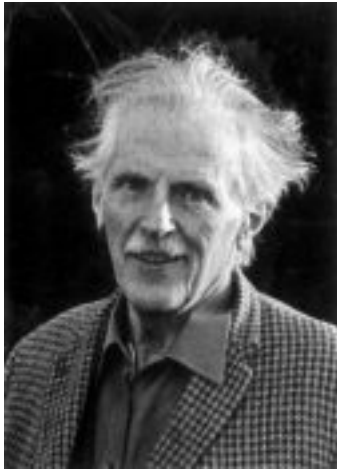
²⁴ *All and Everything*, 1950, p. 1137–40. It is a wrong use of words to label either obedience or love as good and the other as evil. Evolution is ‘against God,’ and yet upon it He has “placed all His hopes and expectations for the future welfare of Everything Existing.” Ibid, p. 197.

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John G. Bennett

The Struggle to “Make Something” for Oneself

by George Bennett

In 1971, less than four years before he died, [J. G. Bennett](#) established the International Academy for Continuous Education, an “experimental” Fourth Way school. The academy at Sherborne, England was the culmination of a spiritual search that had begun more than fifty years earlier, at the time of his first meeting, in 1920, with the Russian teacher and philosopher George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff.

At Sherborne, in courses lasting only ten months, Bennett took on the task of trying to pass on—to one hundred students at a time—the fruits of his own lifetime’s search. He considered it to be a task he had been given and that there was a real need, especially among younger people, for the kind of practical knowledge and deep spiritual wisdom that he had earned during his eventful life. It was a hazardous undertaking. Bennett didn’t know whether it would be possible to convey anything of substance in so short a time, and he had neither candidates nor material resources. But, in the summer of 1971, these quickly came together.

His teaching method was based on that developed in the early 1920s by Gurdjieff at the “[Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man](#)” at Fontainebleau in France. Students undertook practical work in the house and garden; they attended talks in which Bennett developed his own ideas; there were readings from Gurdjieff’s writings and classes in his psychology, as well as intensive work on Gurdjieff’s “Movements,” an extraordinary repertoire of sacred and ritual dances. In addition, Bennett worked with Sufi techniques that he had learned directly from masters in the Middle East.

Bennett referred to Sherborne and the “ideal human society” he envisioned in the last year of his life as “experiments.” This word expresses his understanding of “hazard” as a factor that permeates all existence and gives it its “drama”—thus he titled his great four-volume work *The Dramatic Universe*. Bennett understood hazard to give the danger of failure along with the possibility of progress, but he was not afraid of either one. In the course of his long search to make sense of the world and man’s place within it, he tried many methods and consulted many sources of wisdom. Practical by nature, he was

prepared to use these methods if he found by his own practice that they bore fruit, or to abandon them if they did not.

The oldest of three children, J. G. Bennett was born June 8, 1897, of an American mother and an English father. His mother was from an old pre-Revolutionary New England family and his father was a correspondent for Reuters, the international news agency. Though Bennett makes little reference to his childhood in his autobiography, *Witness*, he acknowledges elsewhere that he owed his mother a great debt for instilling in him the virtues of hard work and tolerance.

Spending his early childhood in Italy, he learned to speak Italian before he spoke English. This laid the foundation for an extraordinary facility with languages, which later in his life enabled him to talk to many spiritual teachers (Gurdjieff among them) in their native tongues and to study Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, and Christian sacred texts in their original forms. Formal education for Bennett stopped at school. He never took up the scholarship in mathematics that he won from Oxford University, for circumstances propelled him into life so fast that he never had time to go back. He was an excellent sportsman and captained the school rugby football team. He went on to play for the army against such redoubtable opponents as the New Zealand national team. He broke his arm once and his collar bone twice in that robust sport, and he maintained that these experiences gave him, at an early age, a valuable freedom and indifference toward his own body.

In the First World War, at the age of twenty-one, Bennett became a captain in the Royal Engineers, with responsibility for signals and telegraphy. Reading his letters of the time, one is struck by a surprising indifference to the dangers he faced. One letter, to his fiancée, was written even as he took shelter in a bomb crater from a two-way bombardment that had caught him on open ground. The war, however, led to one of the seminal experiences of his life. Being badly injured in the head and lying unconscious on an operating table, he experienced an "out of body" state that convinced him there is something in man that can exist independent of the body.

While convalescing, Bennett was invited to join a course in the Turkish language because the army needed intelligence officers in the Near East. Throwing himself wholeheartedly into the task, as was his nature, he eventually found himself, at an absurdly early age, in Constantinople holding a very sensitive position between the British and the Turks. Fluency in Turkish made him the confidant of many high-ranking political figures there, and it allowed him to develop the knowledge and love of Turkey that would remain with him all his life. More importantly, he began to understand other modes of thought than European.

In 1921, in the aftermath of the Great War and the Russian Revolution, Constantinople was the center of great ferment and change. It was also the funnel through which many displaced persons passed on their way to the West, and it was part of Bennett's job to monitor their movement. Among these were two most extraordinary men with whom circumstance brought Bennett into contact: G. I. Gurdjieff and [P. D. Ouspensky](#). Bennett met Gurdjieff through a close friend in the Turkish royal family, [Prince Sabaheddin](#), a reformist thinker and a profoundly spiritual man. Bennett's intermittent meetings with Gurdjieff and

Ouspensky in Constantinople shaped the direction of his later spiritual search. But when they moved on to Europe, Bennett remained in Turkey, fascinated by the labyrinthine political and social developments that finally led to the overthrow of the sultanate and to the establishment of the Turkish republic.

His immersion in Turkish affairs and his relationship with Winifred Beaumont, an English woman living in Turkey, completed the growing estrangement from his first wife, Evelyn, who had remained in England. Bennett had married young—too young, perhaps—immediately after the war, and despite the birth of a daughter, Ann, their marriage didn't last. After the divorce, Bennett married Mrs. Beaumont, a woman twenty years his senior, and they remained together until she died forty years later. When Bennett returned to England, he was consulted by the government as an expert on the Middle East, and he acted as an interpreter at the London Conference in 1924, which was supposed to settle matters between Turkey and Greece. He could have then taken up a career in public life and was invited to stand for parliament, but it was already clear to Bennett that his spiritual search would take priority.

In the summer of 1923, he renewed his connection with Gurdjieff and spent three months at Gurdjieff's Institute in France. Despite his short stay, Bennett was shown things that convinced him that man is capable of spiritual transformation and that Gurdjieff had profound knowledge and understanding of the techniques by which this could be achieved. Gurdjieff told Bennett that he could help him make significant progress if he would spend two years at the institute. It seems strange that Bennett nevertheless felt obliged to leave, for he was very short of money and felt he needed to put his affairs in order. He expected to return to Gurdjieff soon, however, they did not meet again until 1948.

Back in England, Bennett joined P. D. Ouspensky's groups studying the "system," which Ouspensky had learned from Gurdjieff. Bennett remained with Ouspensky for fifteen years, during which time his professional life took several bizarre turns. He was involved in various brown-coal mining ventures in Greece and Turkey, which, although ultimate failures, nevertheless gave him an expertise in mining and the chemistry of coal. He spent four years based in Greece and was involved in protracted machinations involving land claims of members of the deposed Turkish royal family. During this period, Bennett led something of a buccaneering existence, but by the mid-1930s, he was back in England and involved in the coal industry once again. In 1938, he was asked to head Britain's first industrial research organization, the British Coal Utilisation Research Association (BCURA). BCURA grew in importance with the start of World War II, and research concentrated on finding a coal-based alternative to oil. BCURA developed coal-gas-powered cars, a coal-based plastic, and, more significant if mundane, efficient fireplaces that gave more heat for less fuel. All this time, Bennett continued to work with Ouspensky and the ideas and methods of the "system."

By 1941, when Ouspensky left England to live in the United States, Bennett was running his own study groups and giving his own lectures. Throughout the Second World War, and in spite of it, the groups continued and expanded in London while Bennett began writing and developing his own ideas as well as writing about those of Gurdjieff. But it was not until 1947, when he was fifty, that Bennett published his first book, *The Crisis in Human Affairs*.

People who came to hear his public lectures and those who joined his private groups found a tall, imposing figure, blue eyed and younger looking than his age. Essentially a shy man, not given to small talk, he possessed an intellect that some people found intimidating. When he began lecturing he was nervous, but very soon he abandoned the use of notes and thereafter always spoke spontaneously. As he grew older his lectures became one of the principal ways in which he developed his ideas. He was literally "thinking on his feet." Several of his books began as lecture transcripts, and the talks Bennett gave at Sherborne House in the few years before he died produced some extraordinary insights.

In 1946, Bennett bought Coombe Springs, a seven-acre estate a few miles southwest of London with several buildings and an Edwardian villa on it. He and his wife acquired the property with the intention of starting a small research community. They moved in with ten of his closest pupils, and for twenty years Coombe Springs became a center for group work, attracting hundreds of people.

While publicly Bennett continued to expound Gurdjieff's ideas, privately his inner life was in turmoil. Ouspensky had repudiated him in 1945, which proved very painful, and he had lost touch with Gurdjieff—whom he had long regarded as his teacher—believing him to be dead. So the discovery in 1948 that Gurdjieff was alive and living in Paris was highly significant. In the remaining eighteen months before Gurdjieff died (on October 29, 1949) Bennett took every opportunity to go to Paris—usually during the weekend—despite his heavy professional schedule (at Powell Duffryn, the coal company for whom he now worked) and his responsibility for group work at Coombe Springs.

In the summer of 1949, he spent a month working intensively with Gurdjieff in Paris, and this experience laid the foundation for a significant transformation in his life and spiritual work. It was a turning point, and in the remaining twenty-five years of his life Bennett became more approachable and more compassionate. Considering how little actual time he spent with Gurdjieff, it is extraordinary how much he made of the opportunities. Gurdjieff's death was a serious blow for Bennett, as it was for all of Gurdjieff's followers. For a while they were able to work together, but gradually factions appeared—partly derived from Gurdjieff's own tendency to sow confusion by giving conflicting authority to his closest associates. In Bennett's case, the conflict was exacerbated by his own willingness to take Gurdjieff's ideas and develop them further and, as he put it in the introduction to his book on Gurdjieff, to struggle to "make something of them for himself."

In 1950 Bennett gave up his professional life, subsequently resisting several attractive offers to return to a career in industrial administration and research, and concentrated instead on the group work at Coombe Springs. He lectured frequently about Gurdjieff's system, trying to fulfill a promise he had made to Gurdjieff to do all in his power to spread the ideas and make them understood. In 1953, he undertook a long journey to the Middle East, which brought him into personal contact with the religion of Islam and various Sufi orders.

When he returned to England, he initiated a project to build a large meeting hall at Coombe Springs. The unusual nine-sided architectural design was based on the enneagram, an ancient symbol presented by Gurdjieff as embodying the fundamental laws of nature. The building took two years to complete, and at

the opening in 1957, Bennett commented that the real value of such a project was in building a community rather than the building itself. And there certainly was a great deal of energy at Coombe Springs at the time.

Then, in 1957, Bennett shook the whole place up with his unexpected involvement in Subud, a spiritual movement that had newly appeared from Indonesia. For a number of reasons, Bennett felt that Gurdjieff had expected the arrival of a teaching from that country, and, having tried the Subud spiritual exercise himself, he threw himself with characteristic energy into helping Pak Subuh, the movement's founder, disperse his teaching. He traveled extensively to spread the Subud message, both with Pak Subuh and on his own. He learned Indonesian and was so able to translate Pak Subuh's lectures into various languages. Bennett's own introductory book, *Concerning Subud*, sold thousands of copies worldwide.

Some of Bennett's pupils were dismayed, and his enthusiasm for Subud deepened the divisions with some of the other Gurdjieff groups in London and Paris. Subud—with its emphasis on submission to the will of God and its reliance on a single practice, the latihan—seemed to some to be the antithesis of Gurdjieff's methods for spiritual awakening, and many people left the Coombe Springs groups. Others, however, came in large numbers, and for several years Coombe Springs was the headquarters of the Subud movement in Europe. It attracted serious seekers and sensation seekers as well as unsolicited newspaper headlines. But by 1962, after devoting himself selflessly to its growth and expansion, Bennett left the Subud organization, feeling that a return to the Gurdjieff method was necessary.

With a small group, Bennett began to work once again with Gurdjieff's system. He resumed work on the final volumes of his magnum opus, *The Dramatic Universe* (the first volume had been published in 1956; the second appeared in 1961). In early 1963 he presented a plan to the council of the Institute for Comparative Study of History, Philosophy, and the Sciences—which actually owned Coombe Springs and which Bennett had founded in 1946—proposing a renewal of the community which while still open to Subud members would be primarily one where people would be dedicated to spiritual transformation along the lines of the Gurdjieff system. Although he maintained to the end of his life that he had derived great benefit from Subud, it was now the turn of Subud members to be dismayed, and many turned against him.

Meanwhile, Bennett had made an important contact with a Hindu saint living in Nepal: the Shivapuri Baba, who was 135 years old when Bennett visited him in 1961. Bennett went again in 1963, and once more he undertook the promotion of the ideas of another. The simplicity and the rigor of the Shivapuri Baba's teaching appealed to Bennett, who was later to refer to the old saint as his teacher.

By the mid-1960s, although the work at Coombe Springs had gathered new momentum, Bennett was ready to make yet another change. He and his groups had become involved with Idries Shah (who is now very well known as an exponent of Sufism but who was then just establishing himself in England), and once again Bennett offered his help. Along with the Institute for Comparative Study, he proposed giving the whole property of Coombe Springs over to Shah. It seemed a ridiculous notion, for the land was becoming very valuable, but, nevertheless, in the spring of 1966 the gift was made. After Bennett and

some of the Coombe Springs residents had moved into a house in the neighboring town of Kingston-upon-Thames, Shah, quickly, sold Coombe Springs for a housing development!

Many thought Bennett had made another big mistake. But, in truth, Shah had performed a real service—quite the opposite of the way it appeared—by helping Bennett to become completely free of this place to which he had devoted twenty years of his life. Without that sacrifice, it is doubtful whether Bennett would have been able to embark on the last and perhaps most significant project of his life: the inauguration of an experimental Fourth Way school for the passing on of techniques for spiritual transformation. This new school was not established immediately. For the next four years, Bennett lived quietly with his family: he had married Elizabeth Howard in 1958 following the death of his second wife and now had two sons and two young daughters.

With a small group of scientists, he was developing “Systematics,” a practical analytical method based on his own researches—and ultimately on what he had learned from Gurdjieff—into the laws governing processes in the natural world. This research led to an ill-fated attempt to market a structured learning method, but it is clear, with hindsight, that Bennett was waiting to see what his next task should be. All the while, he continued group work with his pupils and made new contacts with teachers in the Near East.

After becoming very dangerously ill and nearly dying in 1969—this experience is described in the last edition of his autobiography—he took another important step in his spiritual life, one that appeared to change him fundamentally. Shortly after this bout with death, he became very interested in the condition of young people, especially those who surfaced after the social and cultural turmoil of the 1960s with serious questions about the significance of life. As part of his research into the way they were feeling, Bennett even attended the huge rock music festival on the Isle of Wight (off the southern coast of England) in 1970. He soon thereafter established an “academy” to teach some of what he had learned during a lifetime of trying to discover the “sense and aim of life, and of human life in particular.”

Initially, he thought in terms of two dozen students working in Kingston, but soon realized that work on the land—an essential part of any program to teach people about the proper relationship between mankind and the rest of creation—would require a larger number. And, then, there was a huge response to his proposal—particularly in the United States. Very quickly, he attracted one hundred pupils, and in the fall of 1971, with the support of the Institute for Comparative Study, he inaugurated “Sherborne,” the International Academy for Continuous Education, in the village of Sherborne, Gloucestershire, England.

Bennett proposed five, ten-month courses, “as an experiment.” These proved fruitful, and many people have continued to work with the ideas and methods he presented. His aim was to run the courses and then—in characteristic fashion—to do something else. However, he died shortly after the start of the fourth course, on December 13, 1974. That course and the fifth were completed by his wife, Elizabeth, working with a few of his most experienced pupils.

What he would have done had he lived another decade is a matter of conjecture. In the months before he

died, Bennett worked hard to establish an experimental "ideal human society" embodying the methods and ideas that he had developed and derived from Gurdjieff. He made big efforts to overcome the rifts that had grown between different groups of Gurdjieff's followers, and, what is most intriguing, he was beginning to talk about the development of new forms of worship appropriate for the modern world.

J. G. Bennett left a legacy of selfless giving and unrelenting inquiry into the mystery and meaning of existence. He published numerous works (many unfortunately now out of print), inspired hundreds to seek reality at the expense of self-centeredness, and stimulated the formation of groups of students who have continued to work with the ideas and methods he passed on at Sherborne and Coombe Springs. These people are continuing to this day to learn from his example that, if one wants to follow a system of ideas of spiritual transformation, one has to work with them and try to make something of them for oneself.

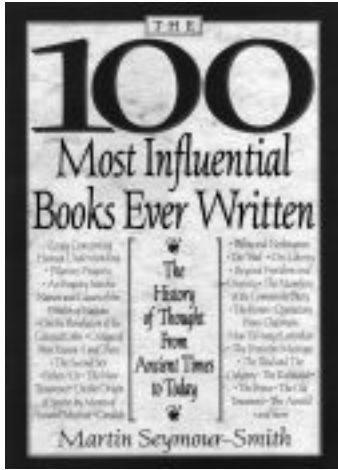
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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

The 100 Most Influential Books Ever Written **by Martin Seymour-Smith**

A Review by J. Walter Driscoll

Martin Seymour-Smith presents reviews of one hundred books, which he points out “*actually* have exercised, if sometimes in devious and very subterranean ways, the most decisive influence upon the course of human thought—and therefore, of course, upon various kinds of conduct too.” He emphasizes that books are included for review “because they have changed or colored the way in which people, even whole nations—as well as individuals—think of themselves.” This bold, perceptive compilation surveys the great books of many cultures, languages, and times, progressing in chronological order from the *I Ching* to B. F. Skinner’s *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*. All of the books have, through their influence, articulated or changed the vision of a people. The result of the author’s lifetime study of the great works of literature, philosophy, science, religion and history, this book provides a spirited and informative guide to the development of thought. Each of the 100 reviews provides a historical background, an overview of the text, the author, and the factors determining the significance of a particular book, as well as analysis of why the book is of enduring significance today. His compilation provides a truly liberal education, especially for independent readers studying outside the shelter of academe.

Seymour-Smyth is the first author to include Gurdjieff and [Beelzebub’s Tales](#) in a ‘best books’ compendium. He points out that Gurdjieff’s doctrine is “the most convincing fusion of Eastern and Western thought that has yet been seen... The first important thing to note about this doctrine is that there is, explicitly, no room at all for anyone in it who does not approach it itself in a truly critical and skeptical spirit. It has a cosmology and a psychological system—and a method, often harsh or comic but in any case entirely in the hands of the teacher, of helping people to *become conscious*. But a complete sincerity is required, a sincerity that goes quite beyond devotion or faith as those are ordinarily understood.”

In addition to his penetrating six-page commentary on *Beelzebub’s Tales*, Seymour-Smith makes perceptive references elsewhere to Gurdjieff’s ideas: in relation to Plotinus’ conception of evil, the influence of the Kabbalah and Kierkegaard’s notion of warring selves, and the search for a unifying ‘I.’

He quotes Gurdjieff's observation that "Woman knows everything, but has forgotten it," in his discussion of the impact on men, of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. Seymour-Smith notes the emphasis on the "mechanical" nature of human behavior in Gurdjieff's and B. F. Skinner's ideas when he discusses the latter's *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*. He concludes that Skinner among others, failed to recognize "what the much maligned Gurdjieff had recognized: That there was a whole submerged side to humanity that was *not* mechanical, that was 'religious,' that wanted the truth, that yearned for what the existentialists used to call (but they investigated the matter less precisely than had Gurdjieff) 'authenticity,' that wished to discover why it existed at all."

British critic, biographer and poet, Martin Seymour-Smith, died on July 1, 1998, at the age of seventy. His more than forty books span five decades. They include several major literary reference sets and biographies. This, his latest work, provides a fine monument and testifies to his enduring stature as an authoritative scholar and skilled writer.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson

George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff

1950

[Chapter 94 from *The 100 Most Influential Books Ever Written: The History of Thought from Ancient Times to Today* by Martin Seymour-Smith (1998) Secaucus, NJ: Carol Publishing Group, a Citadel Press Book. This book is available from many sources including but not limited to: [Abintra-the-Bookseller](#) and [Amazon.com](#)]

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Thirty years ago twelve of us spent many years in central Asia, and we reconstructed the Doctrine by oral traditions, the study of ancient costumes, popular songs, and certain books. The Doctrine has always existed, but the tradition has been interrupted. In antiquity some groups and castes knew it, but it was incomplete. The ancients put too much stress on metaphysics; their doctrine was too abstract.

Gurdjieff said this in 1923 to a questioner into the origins of the doctrine that, about a decade earlier, he had started to teach. The influence of [Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson](#), which contains the essence of the doctrine, has been profound but generally unobtrusive. It contains, although in sometimes deliberately obscure form, the gist of that peculiar teaching which is expounded by [P. D. Ouspensky](#) in his more immediately lucid and accessible *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching*—a book that, since its publication in 1949, just after Ouspensky's death, has been read by millions. Furthermore, at the end of his life, Gurdjieff—despite the differences between the two men that had developed—gratefully acknowledged (in his always broken English) Ouspensky's book with the words: “*This what I said.*”

Why, then, not choose *In Search of the Miraculous* here, instead of *Beelzebub's Tales*? The reason is simple: without the “system” or doctrine taught by Gurdjieff, there would be no *In Search of the*

Miraculous. And *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* is Gurdjieff's own "science-fiction"-style exposition of the teaching that he, in collaboration with others, synthesized and evolved. Thus he started a movement, known among its participants as "The Work," which influenced a multitude, sometimes publicly but more often privately. Kipling, J. B. Priestley, and Aldous Huxley are just some of the better-known writers who were influenced by the doctrine; but many more American senators, British members of Parliament (not, however, holders of high office), businessmen, bankers, and others have been involved—either with Gurdjieff himself, or with Ouspensky, who taught his methods, from the early 1920s onward. The doctrine is the most convincing fusion of Eastern and Western thought that has yet been seen. It makes Blavatskyism or Transcendental Meditation look simpleminded or even exploitative; but, just as Kepler acknowledged in the popular astrology of his day a "pearl in a heap of dung," so "The Work" grants something precious at the heart of those and other more popular movements.

Elements of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity (especially Eastern Orthodox), the Kabbalah, Sufism, Pythagoreanism, and other religions and systems are present in the doctrine. Ouspensky's invaluable book, much of which quotes Gurdjieff ("G") speaking in the first person, is earnest, obsessed with various ideas about reincarnation (Gurdjieff called this notion "near the truth, but only approximate"), and at first acquaintance rather more in line with the popular "mysterious East" than otherwise. No one could accuse *Beelzebub's Tales* of being earnest; yet all those who have persevered with it have acknowledged a tragic masterpiece. Gurdjieff believed that his reconstructed doctrine contained much of the truth about human existence; he thought truth difficult; he therefore made intense difficulties and created many obstacles for anyone who wished to discover it.

George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (or Giorgiades, to give the Greek version of his name), the product of a marriage between a Greek father and an Armenian mother, was born at Kars in (then) Russian Armenia in 1866. His father, Ionnas Giorgiades, was, significantly, a grazier by necessity but an *askokh*, a bardic poet such as those who once recited *Homer* in ancient Greece, by true profession. After a plague (1873) had exterminated his cattle, he turned to the timber business. From his earliest years Gurdjieff had heard his father recite folkloristic and mythological poems, and also stories of the famous Turkic "wise fool," Mullah Nassr Eddin, who became one of Gurdjieff's comic role models, and whose pithy and paradoxical style he adapted in such sayings as "as irritable as a man who has undergone full treatment by a famous European nerve specialist." The boy was brought up to be a priest. There were six other children.

Gurdjieff liked to strain people's credulity as well as to shock them—he was a great believer in shocks: these, usually very temporarily, make people become what they really are. Beings, he would earnestly state, live on the surface of the sun—which is icy cold. Apes are descended from men.

His style was deliberately opaque, colloquial, jocular, almost light. The book in question, his main work, was scribbled in pencil in Gurdjieff's native Armenian, then put into Russian by Russian pupils; for the English version we are mainly indebted to the English editor and writer [Alfred Orage](#), who worked on it in close consultation with Gurdjieff. Orage had given up his highly successful career as editor of the *New Age* in the early 1920s, in order to study with Gurdjieff.

Of all this century's spiritual teachers Gurdjieff was unique in that he determinedly sought to undermine his pupils' devotion to him personally—to the extent of renouncing their genuine love for him—in order to make them think and act for themselves.

For some twenty or thirty adventurous years Gurdjieff sought knowledge and wisdom in the company of others, men and women, who wanted to answer fundamental questions—such questions as: *Why am I here? Why are we here? Is there a purpose to life? In what way, if in any at all, are men capable of immortality? What are the laws of nature, and how much can we know of them?* He gave a fictionalized account of those years in his simplest and most immediately accessible book: *Meetings With Remarkable Men*. It was made into a film by Peter Brook under the same title in 1979; the screenplay was written by Brook himself, under the close guidance of Gurdjieff's own appointed successor, [Jeanne de Salzmann](#), who died in 1990 at the age of 101.

The best-known period of Gurdjieff's life came in the early 1920s. After opening his school, which he always referred to as for “the harmonious development of man,” in various cities—he had to move frequently owing to the Russian Revolution and the subsequent European political situation—he set up at an old priory, [the Prieuré](#), at Fontainebleau. Here he obtained some newspaper publicity, the vast majority of which was footling and wildly inaccurate. But he did not repudiate it: He wanted to attract the right kind of pupil, and he also did not scruple to soak rich Americans or others for the money he needed.

His wheeler-dealer methods repelled Ouspensky who, a Russian, was more secretive and earnest than Gurdjieff, part of whose method of teaching used humor and shocks to impart the lesson. Many distinguished people such as Orage and [Dr. Maurice Nicoll](#) (hitherto a devoted Jungian) came to him; some such as Orage and Nicoll lasted the course, but many, such as the then well-known doctor [James Carruthers Young](#), did not. Rich men did not like to submit to the indignity of having their cherished opinions challenged as worthless, or being set to dig ditches only to be told to fill them in again—or, perhaps even worse, to be told, when they had performed a task well and quickly: “Must be done in half the time.” But those who stayed were eventually encouraged.

Then, in late 1922, Gurdjieff received the New Zealand story writer Katherine Mansfield at the Prieuré. Then at the height of her fame, and there because she valued the system as taught to her by Ouspensky and, chiefly, by her publisher Orage, she was already riddled with tuberculosis. Medical treatments had worsened her condition. Gurdjieff looked after her, made her feel welcome, and gave her a spiritual peace which she would have lacked anywhere else. By the time of her sudden but inevitable death in January 1923 she had expressed her gratitude to Gurdjieff and to the doctrine. But this did not prevent Gurdjieff becoming known as the “charlatan who killed Katherine Mansfield.” However, no student of Mansfield, however reluctant, has been able to do less than defend him in this matter. He made her last days radiant; and himself lies buried near her.

In 1924 Gurdjieff had a near-fatal car accident. He seems to have foreseen it, even to the extent of forbidding a woman who had regularly traveled with him on like occasions from doing so on this one.

Miraculously, he recovered. But he gave up all hope of continuing at Fontainebleau in the old style, with plenty of pupils. Instead he decided, although quite determinedly not a “*bon ton* writer,” to leave his own record of the doctrine. He had finished by the end of the 1930s, although the final volume of what is collectively known as *All and Everything* (*Meetings With Remarkable Men* is the first¹ of the trilogy), the essays of *Life Is Real Only Then, When “I Am”* were never completed. The books circulated among pupils during the rest of Gurdjieff’s life which ended in Paris in late 1949. *Beelzebub* was published in 1950, the other two books later. Gurdjieff always had a few pupils around him after his accident, but never a “school” in the sense that the Prieuré had been.

Some of the more advanced psychological parts of the doctrine have never been given in writing; a few books have been written by those who never met Gurdjieff or studied with his groups, and who have simply tried to take over his mantle. But there is a core of reliable literature to help to elucidate *Beelzebub*, and among this Ouspensky’s *In Search of the Miraculous* is still paramount, although many English-speaking people have preferred the long and detailed *Commentaries on the Teaching of G. I. Gurdjieff and P. D. Ouspensky* by Maurice Nicoll. “The Work,” however, was supposed to be taught in a “school;” it insists that its essence can only be learned in a school, and not from books. It is assumed that there is an almost relentless resistance to self-knowledge built into man: that human beings can only survive—and that in no “personal” sense—by help from one another.

The problem for the post-Gurdjieffian student, though, is *which school?* There are many, some following directly on Gurdjieff; but others follow on Ouspensky, and are markedly aggressive toward Gurdjieff—who is said to have given out the ideas, but in an incoherent form. Others believe that this piecemeal and teasing method of Gurdjieff himself is the only way to keep the student awake and to teach him to work things out for himself. Those, therefore, who now discover the ideas for themselves—usually through books—must make their own decisions. There are many Gurdjieff pages on the Internet, some of them useful—they give salutary warnings about spurious schools, of which there are many.

The first important thing to note about this doctrine is that there is, explicitly, no room at all for anyone in it who does not approach it itself in a truly critical and skeptical spirit. It has a cosmology and a psychological system—and a method, often harsh or comic but in any case entirely in the hands of the teacher, of helping people to *become conscious*. But a complete sincerity is required, a sincerity that goes quite beyond devotion or faith as those are ordinarily understood.

For The Work teaches that men and women as they generally exist are, for most of the time, *asleep*. As Gurdjieff’s great predecessor the Persian poet Rumi put it:

Your life in this world is like a sleeper who dreams he has gone to sleep. He thinks, “Now I sleep,” not knowing that he is already in a second sleep.

We are—as we normally exist—machines whose workings depend entirely upon external stimuli. When we wake from natural sleep we are not in fact in a state of full consciousness, though we imagine that we

are. Thus pupils were told to “remember themselves” as a constant exercise: to try to be aware of their real circumstances, to treat what they had believed to be their real selves as mechanical, to try to discover their chief faults (“chief feature”) which might give them a notion of what they had to put right in themselves. The *personality* of a person was carefully distinguished from his or her *essence*, which could be immortal but which had to educate itself, and to do that by learning to subdue the personality that had been formed around it by external circumstances; yet to form a personality was an indispensable part of the process. The ultimate secret lies in transforming the immediate impressions that are received: these are, literally, food, but not of the grosser physical kind. The process of transforming can only be described as miraculous.

In 1923 [Gurdjieff told Professor Denis Saurat](#) that he had come to Europe because:

I want to add the mystical spirit of the East to the scientific spirit of the West. The Oriental spirit is right, but only in its trends and general ideas. The Western spirit is right in its methods and techniques. Western methods alone are effective in history. I want to create a type of sage who will unite the spirit of the East with Western techniques.

The “human machine” presented by Watson, Skinner, and other behavioristic psychologists seems to have much in common with what Gurdjieff taught. But Gurdjieffian psychology is in fact quite different. Man is indeed a machine, *as he ordinarily is*. But even in the ordinary case he is occasionally awakened by shocks. He reacts as a machine but he has the capacity within himself not to do so. Behavioristic psychologists (and adherents of the notion that conventional scientific methodology by itself can plumb the mystery of a godless universe) do not thus acknowledge any exterior spiritual authority, or any need for a feeling of gratitude that we have been granted existence. And man contains within himself, as indeed has been taught by mystical doctrines from time immemorial, all the attributes of the cosmos. In the brain exist, in addition to an intellectual, an emotional, and an instinctive center, a “higher” emotional and a higher intellectual center. But none of our centers work at their full potential; of the higher centers we have only distorted hints in dreams and visions. The sex center, which should be directly in connection with the higher emotional center, works wrongly, through other centers and not as itself; the intellectual and emotional centers should work in harmony, but do not do so. We are, as we are, incapable of anything even approaching “objective” thinking. As Pareto² and so many others have insisted, we are irrational creatures pretending to be rational.

Beelzebub's Tales gives a mythological account of how all this, and wars and misunderstandings and poverty and the other human ills arose, and of how it may be possible to amend the current state. The doctrine it inimitably expounds is gnostic and kabbalistic in at least the sense that it presents not an utterly perfect God-creator such as Saint Augustine presents, but an unknowable, material “Absolute” whose powers become gradually diminished in an elaborate (and grandly poetic and imaginative) cosmology of inevitable diffusion of energy. This process still serves what we call “Nature,” but, the doctrine goes on to explain, something went very wrong with the situation of the people of this planet, which as a consequence is in a very bad part of the universe (which teems with life). Nowhere has the myth of “original sin,” the notion of Man having “fallen” from a state of bliss, been more vividly or

imaginatively stated than in *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*, which, read with an open mind, can (and has) transformed lives and given them true meaning.

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¹ Oops, *Meeting With Remarkable Men* is the second of the trilogy, not the first. Eds.

² Italian economist and sociologist Vilfredo Pareto, 1848–1923. Eds.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson

Commentary by [A. L. Staveley](#)

Gurdjieff's work, his teaching, is not meant for everyone—neither is [his Book](#) for everyone. Both the teaching and the Book are meant for those who can and will use them.

The world, the civilisation we have known, is disintegrating around us with increasing momentum. The planet, including humanity, is threatened, yet everywhere there is inertia. Many people, including those interested in Gurdjieff's teaching, realize that something new is urgently required in their lives, and that that “something” concerns a transformation in the inner life of Man in the first place, but can and must result also in a huge change in man's outer life.

“Repair the past, Prepare the future” Gurdjieff tells us, and gives great knowledge skillfully concealed so one needs to struggle to decipher it, opening up in the process new pathways through one's thinking and feeling. Great knowledge of the cosmos, knowledge of the past and the future, of how to go about making a new world. But more than all this is the introduction to the awe-inspiring concepts of Conscience and of Reciprocal Maintenance.

First, the divine impulse of Conscience, potentially the representative of the Creator in us, still existing unspoilt in the subconsciousness of man which, as an active factor in everyday consciousness, can become a major step in the evolution of mankind.

The second basic shock for real understanding is the concept of Reciprocal Maintenance. Everything in the Universe everywhere supporting and maintaining everything else—a world away from the limited notions of ecology. We really cannot, and must not, ignore the responsibility for our humanity.

This Book is a guide to becoming a real man. Gurdjieff advised us to read, reread and then read this Book again many, many times. Read it aloud with others and read it to yourself. Even if you read it thirty, even fifty times, you will always find something you missed before—a sentence which gives with great precision the answer to a question you have had for years—a connection to quite another part of the Book. You will eventually build up a network of real ideas that will be your own knowledge, not second-

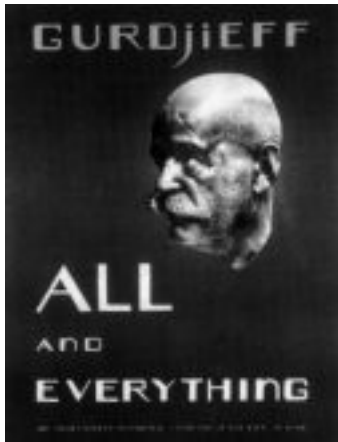
hand, but the priceless, hard-won fruit of your own struggle for understanding.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Superforce and Beelzebub

by Jyri Paloheimo

Our day-to-day existence is cyclic and to a large extent characterized by repetition. Night follows day and one season another. Our activities follow an almost equally rigid pattern. What we do today is much the same as what we did yesterday. Life as we know it is very ‘Newtonian,’ i.e., predictable and mechanical, interrupted only by accidents, both good and bad, over which we have little control. The final and inevitable ‘accident’ is the cessation of life for each one of us.

This was also the view that we had of the universe before the emergence of new developments in physics—relativity theory and quantum physics in particular. Everything was mechanical and, at least in theory, calculable. Matter, except in solar furnaces or in the thin film of organic life coating the earth’s surface, was essentially stable and immutable. Its basic building block, the atom, was a model of our equally stable solar system. Planets, solar systems, and galaxies in our large universe were distant and isolated from each other, influenced only by the faint action of the gravity of their remote neighbors. Nothing but empty space existed between them. Nevertheless, they all shared common, universal and homogeneous time. Stability was only marred by the imperceptible yet relentless action of the second law of thermodynamics, which in time will bring an end, not only to all life, but to all of the universe as well, in the form of a ‘heat death.’ Except for a difference in time scale, the fate of the universe is no better than our own....

[The complete text is available in the [printed copy](#) of this issue.]

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

A. R. Orage

by [Louise Welch](#)

The brilliant editor of the *New Age*, regarded by T. S. Eliot as London's best literary critic of his time, abandons his journal and is next heard of cleaning stables in the farmyard of a French chateau. The magnet is a then little-known Greek named Gurdjieff, called by some a mystic and by others a magician. How could that departure from his lifework be understood by the friends of [Alfred Richard Orage](#) in 1923?

“He was a man who could be both perfectly right and wholly wrong,” said Eliot, “but when he was wrong one respected him all the more, as a man who was seeking the essential things....”

Another *New Age* writer, Ezra Pound, said, “Orage's impersonality was his greatness, and the breadth of his mind was apparent in the speed with which he threw over a cumbrous lot of superstitions, and a certain number of fairly good ideas, for a new set of better ones.”

The light thrown on the mind of Orage by his friends and critics tells us more about the essential man than such details as his birth in rural Yorkshire in January 1873 and his effect on his school teachers quite early in his life. At twelve, the excellence of his mind and his sympathetic personal qualities so impressed the county squire that he helped young Alfred to go to teachers' training college, where he swallowed, absorbed and improved upon the material he was to use for the next ten years in teaching children.

It is not surprising to learn from an old friend of Orage's that his pupils competed for his attention rather than he for theirs. The fertilizing gift, that talent of his for calling the creative impulse in others, had its effect on people of all ages.

If temperament is destiny, there was something fated in his decision to marry, when he knew that the price he would have to pay was giving up the education at Oxford that he desired and was promised. In the end, it may have been a good thing to have lost a conventional education, for that might conceivably have fettered an intelligence so original, dynamic and inquiring, a mind that abhorred fuzzy thinking and defined reason as the sum of all functions, not the sterile, unconnected activity of the head alone. “A

man,” Orage said, “can only think as deeply as he feels.”

“To see a thing in the germ, this I call intelligence,” the Irish poet, [AE](#)¹, quotes Laotze, and then remarks that Orage had such intelligence. “Almost everywhere I explored in his mind,” AE says, “I found the long corridors lit.” It was probably that trait more than any other that drew the subtlest and best endowed writers of the day to the *New Age*, often for little or no pay. To mention a few of them, there were Sir Herbert Read, G. K. Chesterton, Storm Jameson, Arnold Bennett, Hilaire Belloc, Edwin Muir, A. J. Penty and P. L. Travers; even Bernard Shaw congratulated himself on his good judgment in contributing some five hundred pounds to help start the publication of the *New Age*.

In trying to understand a mind so unlike his own, yet to him sympathetic, Chesterton said that Orage, whose literary style he admired, managed somehow to avoid the awful fate of looking like a literary man. He added that Orage aimed at “doing something rather than writing something ... He was in the true sense a man of action....” At the same time Chesterton regretted that English as good as Orage’s might disappear into the files of the *New Age*.

Certainly the true works of Orage can not be limited to the literary. His passionate interest in cleaning up the kitchen of economics began with his eloquent advocacy of Guild Socialism, a socialism not concerned merely with improving the material lot of men but one that asked for a high quality of skill in the goods produced and for conditions allowing inner development in the producers. Later, with energy and brilliant common sense, he supported the ideas of Social Credit as put forth by Major Douglas. To those who followed the thought of Orage during this period, it is now quite evident that many of the most practical and desirable solutions recommended today by economists, mirror Orage’s suggestions made in the *New Age* and the *New English Weekly* long in advance of his time.

His foresight was observable not only in economics, a field that interested and engaged him because he felt it to be the necessary ground work for a life concerned with more inclusive and essential interests—the life of art and ideas. The next powerful influence was to be the philosophy and metaphysics of the East, an influence, Orage held, that could bring a much needed renaissance of thought and feeling to the Western world. *The Bhagavad Gita* and the *Mahabharata* become, as his biographer, Philip Mairet says, “vital and permanent influences in his mental life.”

But his search for truth was not restricted to Eastern teachings. He refused nothing that promised enlightenment. He studied the theories of Freud and Jung, characteristically enlarging the context by comparing them with the ideas of Thomas Aquinas, the Hermeticists and Patanjali. Of the articles Orage wrote in this connection, Mairet says, “How good they are, even now!” He tells us that Orage discussed the new psychology with a number of distinguished psychiatrists and physicians who agreed with him that a psychoanalysis might be worse than useless without a psychosynthesis. They formed a group to explore this idea.

It may have been the need for this psychosynthesis that drew Orage to the lectures of P. D. Ouspensky, who had appeared in London, and finally to Ouspensky’s teacher, G. I. Gurdjieff. As one who had

investigated and practiced the soundest ideas available in the world of metaphysics, Orage's touchstone was sensitive to the truth he needed; as he said simply to his secretary, who regarded his leaving the *New Age* as the abandonment of all his work, "I am going to find God."

He was seven years with Gurdjieff, much of which he spent in the United States, where he was loved and appreciated. There, as he said, he experienced what a true brotherhood might be. When he returned to England to found the *New English Weekly*, it was his intention to make it a vehicle for important ideas—metaphysical, psychological as well as economic—including of course those of the Gurdjieff teaching he had spent so many intensive years studying. In that last period he kept a journal, some of which was published; and three essays from it are included here, in addition to the essay "On Love," which he wrote after he had met Gurdjieff.² His comment that it was "freely adapted from the Tibetan" is, of course, Orage's way of gently leading the reader to an impersonal consideration of the ideas the essay contains—quite apart from his own preference for anonymity.

"On Love" has already become something of a classic. It will no doubt find additional literary acclaim before the end of this 'Age of Aquarius.' It has already quietly made its way into the minds and hearts of many, in the role Orage would most have wanted—as an influence in the direction of individual inner growth.

~ • ~

¹ George W. Russell. Eds.

² These three essays as originally published in the *Aryan Path*, along with a fourth, are included in this issue under Orage's name as "My Note Book." The essay "[On Love](#)" is much anthologized and readily available. Eds.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

My Note Book

by [A. R. Orage](#)

October 1933

[**A. R. Orage** has the advantages of one who has educated himself, and therefore is not hindered by old moulds of thought; he used his vision and imagination in the past in editing *The New Era* [*The New Age*], and is doing so now as Editor of *The New English Weekly*. *The Aryan Path* will publish every quarter, a few pages of his “Note Book;” in this first instalment, Mr. Orage writes about the ancient culture of India and its influence in the modern world. This theme is very near to our own meditations; we are labouring to restore the use of the forgotten and the abandoned highway—the Aryan Path. Mr. Orage uses the term Aryan in a true sense and it must not be confused with ignominies of the Nazis in Germany who claim for their barbarities the backing of Aryan culture.—*The Aryan Path* Eds.]

It is certainly not with any chauvinist intention that I would stress the Aryanism of India. But in matters of cultural values, words and their association are very nearly all important; and it is of great advantage that in their first presentation a set of values should be described by a name already in good repute. The auspices under which Indian culture has hitherto been presented to the world have not, on a candid examination, been particularly favourable. Forbid that I should underrate the labours of scholars, Indian and European, in the field of literary research, textual editing, and of painstaking translation. My criticism is that from the very start—with extremely rare exceptions—the scholars on both sides, Indian and European alike, have largely failed to *communicate* the spirit of the originals so as at once to be assimilable to the common understanding of both peoples. And the reason for this failure, I believe, is to be found in the fact that Indians failed to claim and assume common Aryan values, while Europeans in general paid only lip homage to the community of racial ancestry....

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

My Note Book

by [A. R. Orage](#)

January 1934

Modern Knowledge and Ancient—Disappearance of Soul-Science—Coins—Conventional and Intrinsic Values—The Absolutely Intrinsic forever Unknowable—Bio-Chemistry in 600 A. D.—Men and Things Radio-Active.

[Friends and admirers of **A. R. Orage**, Editor of *The New English Weekly* describe him as a practical mystic, others as an impatient idealist; either way, he and his newspaper are forces to reckon with in the building of a new society everywhere. In this quarterly instalment of his “Note Book” he makes use of Analogy, which is the guiding law in Nature, the only true Ariadne’s thread that can lead us, through the inextricable paths of her domain, towards her primal and final mysteries.—*The Aryan Path* Eds.]

Suppose that the capacity to carry on the discipline of modern science were to atrophy in the world, but that our textbooks remained to be discovered by a future generation,—what would our remote descendants make of them? If they had reason, they could not but conclude that our scientific dissertations appeared to exhibit reason. And since many of them would appear to refer to practical results they could not but conclude that there seemed to be method in our unintelligibility. Ultimately, perhaps, or possibly through the agency of a few people who had preserved the traditions, our science might begin to be understood; and little by little, if all went well, our textbooks would be read as intelligently as they were written. I am often tempted to employ this parallel when reading the “ancient scriptures.” Nobody with reason can deny that, however indecipherable, fantastic and irrelevant they may appear, they have the form and formality not only of reason but of exact reasoning. And nobody, again, of any judgment can deny that at least they appear to be concerned about practical matters and about practical matters of obviously the very highest importance to the authors. Of relatively late years, moreover, the parallel can be carried into the field of interpretation and revival. Many of us remember, as one of our greatest experiences, the translation into modern language of some of the ancient texts by Madame Blavatsky. It is true that even Madame Blavatsky could not reduce the ancient wisdom to the level of our ordinary understanding; but without the smallest doubt she convinced many of us, first, that the ancient wisdom of the soul was once a science; secondly, that its disappearance from the world was

not on account of its supersession by a superior science, but on account of some temporary occultation of the higher faculties of man; thirdly, that the tradition of the science remained and possibly continued to be taught by its masters and practised by its pupils; and, finally, that it was concerned with the highest values, without the realisation of which all our civilisation is doomed merely to creep, as it were, on the ground. What, and much more, the translation of the Rosetta tablet was to our knowledge of Cuneiform, Madame Blavatsky's discovery of a key to the ancient science was, and will be, to the world's knowledge of its own spiritual past and future. It is even unimportant to inquire whether Madame Blavatsky did anything else, or, indeed, was anything else than an inspired "reader" of the long-dead and forgotten language. In the history of values still to be realized she will rank as the great re-discoverer and initiator....

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

My Note Book

by [A. R. Orage](#)

April 1934

Blinds and Breathing—A Respectful Suggestion to Gandhiji—Life, Nature and Art—Western Materialism an Ancient School—Leisure and Yoga—Kali-yuga and Man.

[**A. R. Orage**, Editor of *The New English Weekly*, passes on a very helpful “tip” to the readers and students of old Indian texts. There are people who read the *Bhagavad-Gita* and *Yoga-Sutras* of Patanjali upside down, and there are those who read too literally. Much damage to mental balance and even to bodily health results. Breathing, or Pranayama, about which Mr. Orage writes, awakening of Kundani and the development of the Chakras, etc., are undertaken without even a proper comprehension, let alone competent personal guidance. Thus, we know of one person, among those who have practiced meditation according to some verses in the sixth chapter of the *Gita*, who succeeded in becoming somewhat cross-eyed as a result of “the gaze directed to the tip of his nose without looking in any direction” (verse xiii), and then blamed the *Gita*! Carefully read, this description is but a picture of how the true contemplator seems to an outside observer—he is not gazing at the tip of his nose, he only appears as if he were. The same explanation holds good for verses 27–28 in the fifth chapter of the *Gita*. Instances can be multiplied.

“As above, so below,” is a recognized fundamental of Esoteric Philosophy; from within without is ever the course of progress—cosmic and human. When the order is reversed in practice, idolatry results; since the inner meaning of the symbol is not recognized the outer object is taken as real. Forgetting that man is made in the image of Deity, people conceive God in human form. A special feature of the men of this hard iron age, to which Mr. Orage also refers, is that they mistake beauty of form for Beauty of Soul, outer personal consciousness for the Inner Ego, and maya for Reality.—*The Aryan Path* Eds.]

The appearance of a fourth edition of M. K. Gandhi’s *Self-Restraint and Self-Indulgence*, while gratifying to all of us who realise Gandhi’s greatness, is a little disturbing to those who would fain follow the high Aryan Path. It was many years ago that Mme. Blavatsky communicated to the present writer, via

the late great Gnostic scholar, Mr. G. R. S. Mead, the clue—I might also say the tip—that the precise instructions laid down in many of the ancient Indian works were what she called a “blind”—that is to say, something to be read with particular care. In many such works, she said, effects were substituted for causes, and for the subtle reason that the causes in question could not be communicated in words. Let us take a simple case. Every state of consciousness, it is well known, has its own characteristic form and rhythm of breathing. Anybody can observe this for himself. When we are excited our breathing is irregular and staccato. In states of peaceful reverie our breathing is correspondingly regular and smooth. And, similarly, every state of consciousness, up to the very highest, is accompanied by a form and rhythm of breathing which is peculiar, typical and characteristic. But now let us suppose that a teacher wishes to induce in his pupil this or the other state of consciousness—how could he set about it? According to Mme. Blavatsky, he could set about it directly or indirectly; directly by personal contact when possible; but indirectly, when contact was not possible, by prescribing the effects for the causes; that is to say, by giving directions as to the form and rhythm of *breathing* in the anticipation that the special mode of breathing would induce the corresponding state of consciousness. The “blind” to which Mme. Blavatsky drew attention lay in precisely this fact; that the substitution of the effect for the cause was in lieu of something better, namely, personal instruction: and, secondly, that the cause when thus, so to say, artificially evoked, was not real, but, as she suggested, as moonlight is to sunlight....

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

My Note Book

by [A. R. Orage](#)

October 1934

The Myth of Progress—Understanding and Attainment—The Self Is or Is Not—Men on Earth and Divine Purpose—Free Will, Fact or Fiction?—Physicists and Psychologists.

In an essay “The Myth of Progress” published in the *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, my old friend, Mr. M. D. Eder, undertakes his usual rôle of *enfant terrible*. There is no Progress; the idea is simply a myth created to make life tolerable; and the realistic objective fact is that “we are born mad, acquire morality, become stupid and unhappy, and then die.” “This natural history of man under domestication,” he says, “is so little agreeable to our self-love” that we devise a myth of Progress as a refuge. But if it comes to a question of devices and refuges, sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander: the “myth” of Progress for the one, and the “myth” of No Progress for the other. And even though Mr. Eder may appeal to the “objective” criterion of “natural history” it is obvious that his reading of natural history may be as subjective as that of the subjectivists themselves; and who is to decide between them? The truth appears to me that we are literally not wise enough to settle any such question at present. Save for a few rare individuals in every age, mankind, as a whole, even in its most developed members, is scarcely beginning to be able to *state* such questions with exactitude; and as for answering them objectively, scientifically, and therefore, *measurably*, neither the men nor the means as yet exist. Mankind, in short, (always excepting the few who, again, are out of court for lack of a competent jury), is trying, in the person of its intellectuals, to solve problems in algebra before it has mastered arithmetic....

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Ouspensky on Love

by Claude Bragdon

The fifteenth chapter of [Tertium Organum](#) is devoted to a discussion of love. We have had Freud on love, and Schopenhauer on love, but what dusty answers do they give to the soul of a lover! Edward Carpenter comes much nearer the mark, but [Ouspensky](#) penetrates to its very center.

We all know, in our secret hearts, that love is a mystical experience, however much we belittle it and degrade it, and strive to use it for our own ends. It is because of our egotisms, our cautions and our cowardices that we rot and smoulder instead of bursting into purifying flame....

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

The Case of P. D. Ouspensky

by Marie Seton

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....

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

***The Theory of Celestial
Influence***

by Rodney Collin

Commentary

[The Theory of Celestial Influence](#) is Rodney Collin's chief monument to his teacher, [P. D. Ouspensky](#). Begun during Ouspensky's last illness and completed shortly after his death, it is a book of staggering philosophical scope written with the electricity of an eyewitness reporter.

Collin saw his task as the reconstruction of the teaching received from Ouspensky. That teaching, originally derived from Gurdjieff, touches on everything. So does this book....

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Gurdjieff Obituary

The Times

November 12, 1949

Mr. George Gurdjieff who recently died in Paris at the age of 77 leaves in nearly every country in the world friends and pupils to whom he was the incomparable teacher of a way of life. His death has seemed to many the premature curtailment of a life that was strenuous to the last days. He was born in the Caucasus in Alexandropol in 1872 and studied under the well known Russian scholar and musician Father Borsh, Dean of the Cathedral at Kars. Until the age of 40 his life was spent in archaeological and anthropological research in Africa, Central Asia and the Far East. Having reached the conviction that his researches had led him to a valid conception of the meaning of human existence, and having discovered methods, some ancient, others new, for the development of the powers latent in the human psyche, he founded in 1910 in Moscow the [Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man](#). After the Russian revolution this was moved to Paris, which have been the center of his activities ever since. Writers, including Katherine Mansfield, [A. R. Orage](#) and [P. D. Ouspensky](#), as well as many scientists and medical men, have been among the many students attracted by his conception of human destiny and impressed by his practical methods. These have hitherto been known only to the circle of his immediate pupils, but in the year before his death, he decided to publish his writings and to permit practical demonstrations to be given of his methods of work.

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Gurdjieff

International Review

Fall 1999 Issue, Vol. III No. 1

In Memoriam: An Introduction to Gurdjieff

Editorial Introduction

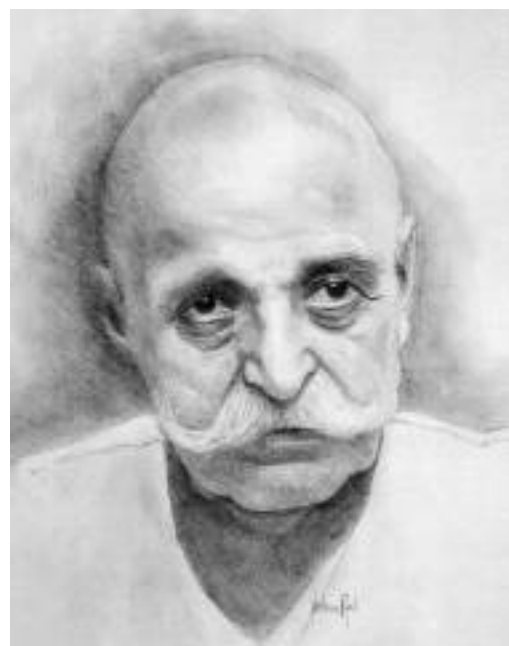
Our ninth issue, the last of the millennium, comes in the same month that George Ivanovich Gurdjieff died in Paris fifty years ago. This provides an occasion to consider the rich multi-faceted portrait of him that the future will inherit. Please note that this publication is now bi-annual: Fall (Oct-1) and Spring (Apr-1). Volumes I & II were quarterly. Selected articles from each back issue continue to be available to provide a sound introduction to Gurdjieff. All back issues are available in their entirety as [printed copies](#).

Excerpts from the Talks and Writings of G. I. Gurdjieff

These selected excerpts on philosophy, religion, science, and psychology are drawn from key passages of Gurdjieff's writings and notes on his talks.

Gurdjieff, G. I. by Michel de Salzman

Dr. de Salzman provides an informed and thoughtful synopsis of Gurdjieff's life, writings and influence as "an incomparable 'awakener' of men" and spiritual teacher who "left behind him a school embodying a specific methodology for the development



“There do exist enquiring minds, which long for the truth of the heart, seek it, strive to solve the problems set by life, try to penetrate to the essence of things and phenomena and to penetrate into themselves. If a man reasons and thinks soundly, no matter which path he follows in solving these problems, he must inevitably arrive back at himself, and begin with the solution of the problem of what he is himself and what his place is in the world around him.”

G. I. Gurdjieff

“Gurdjieff had a very wide range of knowledge, which embraced modern Western scientific theories as well as the special knowledge he had learned in his years of wandering in the East. But it was not so much what he

of consciousness... The Gurdjieff teaching has emerged ... as one of the most penetrating spiritual teachings of modern times.”

George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (1877–1949) **by P. L. Travers**

Travers—author of the *Mary Poppins* books—combines a historical account of Gurdjieff’s search and teaching with a pupil’s personal impressions of “this man whose life has the air of authentic myth.” She emphasizes that Gurdjieff “had come not to bring peace but a special kind of inner warfare and that his mission in life was to destroy men’s complacency and make them aware of their limitations. Only by such means, by what he called ‘conscious labours and intentional sufferings,’ was it possible to bring about their inner development. The Work, as his method came to be called, had, as it very soon appeared, been only too accurately named.”

Gurdjieff: The Unknown Man **by Kenneth Walker**

Dr. Walker’s vivid account, particularly of his first visit to Gurdjieff’s Paris apartment in the late 1940s, is distinguished by his keenly trained powers of observation as a physician. “Gurdjieff used to say that a man revealed himself most clearly in his reactions to sexuality and to money. I could add yet another signpost to a man’s personality, namely, his reaction to Gurdjieff himself. Many reactions were possible, but it was impossible to be indifferent to him or to forget that he was there... Whatever he was, he was something on a much bigger scale than one had ever seen before, or is ever likely to see again.”

The Patriarch Goes West **by William Segal** *[Sample Only]*

Segal compares Gurdjieff to a Zen Patriarch and points out that his teaching has a timely appeal to Westerners, especially for

said or what he did that impressed as what he was. Gurdjieff was a living example of the outcome of his own teaching, which he summed up in the words ‘the harmonious development of man.’”

Kenneth Walker

“No doubt there is a profound connection between Zen and the teaching of Gurdjieff, in that they both propose that only with tough disciplines and practice is it possible to relate to a ‘changeless self.’ Theory without practice, words without an immediate connection to experience, is for followers of both Zen and Gurdjieff as fruitless as ‘pouring from the empty into the void.’”

William Segal

“What I know for certain is that I truly began to recognize Mr. Gurdjieff when my eyes began to open. I saw him as he was to the extent I was able to see myself. From the moment when all my values—all inner facade and indeed also my outer one—began slowly and surely to be transformed, and another world, though still out of reach, began to appear in me, I knew it was he who was the cause.”

Henriette Lannes

those who are “hungry for deeper, more authentic modes of life.”

To Recognize a Master by Henriette Lannes

[Sample Only]

Madame Lannes describes the powerfully unsettling and awakening impact that Gurdjieff’s person and teaching had on her. She emphasizes that Gurdjieff’s legacy is the possibility, through his teaching, of realizing that “We have to recognize a master in ourselves.”

All and Everything by G. I. Gurdjieff

In these first two pages of Gurdjieff’s *All and Everything*, the author concisely describes the scope and purpose of his writings which were “All written according to entirely new principles of logical reasoning.”

An Introduction to the Writings of G. I. Gurdjieff by J. Walter Driscoll

This synopsis is drawn from the author’s *Gurdjieff: a Reading Guide*. It briefly sketches the contents and publication history of Gurdjieff’s writings and the notes that have been published of his talks.

Gurdjieff Observed by Roger Lipsey

Drawing on excerpts from the lesser known but “unexpectedly rich secondary literature,” Lipsey assembles a vivid composite portrait of Gurdjieff and the ontological challenge he presented to everyone around him. In so doing, he provides an excellent introductory survey of the anecdotal literature about Gurdjieff.

“Beelzebub’s Tales ... *gradually yields its meanings only after repeated readings. Each reading of it opens new facets of Gurdjieff’s teaching, not only in intellectual terms but at deep, subconscious levels.*”

Jacob Needleman

“*Efforts to understand and to test the ideas: this is what gives this teaching its dynamic character: the growth of being indeed demands both a direct knowledge and a gradual mastery of the movements of our energy as it manifests itself on different levels.*”

Henri Tracol

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October 1, 1999

G. I. Gurdjieff and His School **by Jacob Needleman**

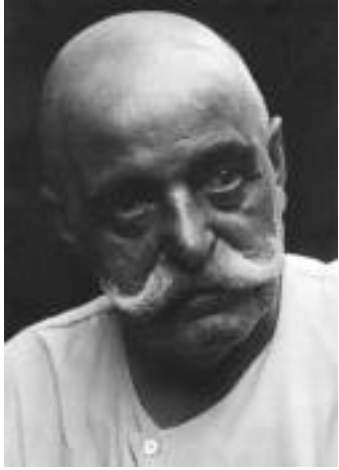
Professor Needleman surveys those aspects of Gurdjieff's "life and teaching that are of signal importance for anyone approaching this influential spiritual teacher for the first time." He traces how Gurdjieff's influence is becoming a factor in contemporary civilization and describes the international activities of The Gurdjieff Foundation.

Gurdjieff as Survivalist **by James Moore** *[Sample Only]*

Moore's introduction to the second edition of his biography offers an astute appraisal of the currents swirling around Gurdjieff's emerging cultural influence and reminds us of the obvious fact that Gurdjieff was "that rarest of creatures, a man who knows what he is talking about."

Let Us Not Conclude **by Henri Tracol**

Tracol characterizes what is essential in the Gurdjieff teaching as a call to "place myself interiorly in relation to what presents itself from the outside." He emphasizes that this teaching guards against dependence on credulity, dogma and subjectivity.



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff

(1877–1949)

by P. L. Travers

GEORGE IVANOVITCH GURDJIEFF (1877–1949). These brackets enclose seventy-two years of a life that, in spite of all that has been written about it, is incapable of exact documentation. It is a fact that Gurdjieff died in 1949, but since he gave his age differently at different times, the date of birth given here can only be approximate. This was all part of his enigma, of the sense he gave of deliberately playing a role, or, as [P. D. Ouspensky](#) wrote, after their first meeting, of being a man “poorly disguised.” His whole life, for the biographers, has the air of an authentic myth, in the sense of something heroic and significant but not to be apprehended except in so far as he could, by these very disguises, mediate it to the general understanding.

Born in Alexandropol, near the Persian frontier of Russia, of a Greek father and an Armenian mother and later tutored by the Dean of the Military Cathedral at Kars, he was brought up in an antique patriarchal world where children were put to sleep at night with the story of Gilgamesh. While he was still a very young man, however, Gurdjieff, true to his role, “disappeared”—as Odysseus must have seemed to disappear from his local world of Ithaca—into that cauldron of history, tradition and ideas that we know as the Middle East. Indeed, in his second book [Meetings With Remarkable Men](#) he describes an even wider orbit, taking in the Gobi Desert, Mecca and Tibet, though here the reader must decide for himself whether such names stand for places or symbols—they could equally well be either—in his unremitting search for a “real and universal knowledge.” “I was not alone,” Ouspensky quotes him as saying. “There were all sorts of specialists among us. We called ourselves ‘The Seekers of Truth!’”

It has to be inferred that by 1914 the Seekers of Truth had succeeded in their quest, for in the autumn of that year Ouspensky records his first meeting with Gurdjieff. “I realised,” he writes, “that I had met with a completely new system of thought surpassing all I had known before. This system threw quite a new light on psychology and explained what I could not understand before in esoteric ideas.”

From this time onwards, since among his pupils there was now one taking notes, Gurdjieff—though only in so far as he himself wished to be—was in the eye of history. For the first two years of the First World

War he elaborated his teachings to groups in Petersburg and Moscow, but with the onset of revolution, flight was inevitable. His journey with his followers through Russia to the Caucasus, then to Constantinople and at last to the West has all the elements of a modern thriller. But it is given an epic quality and extra dimension by the fact that Gurdjieff used the hardships and dangers—always for him the true stuff of existence—to exemplify his teaching and required of his pupils that they should escape not merely with their lives but with their Life. It was not until 1922 that he succeeded in his aim of bringing to the West what he had found in the East by establishing his pilgrim band at the Château du Prieuré, near Fontainebleau, where he founded his [*Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man*](#).

What was the source of his teaching? True to his role, Gurdjieff never openly disclosed it. By examining his writings and the numerous commentaries upon them it might be possible to discover parallels in various traditions—Tantric Buddhism, Hinduism, Sufism, Greek Orthodoxy—possible, but hardly profitable. For the fundamental features of his method cannot be traced to any one source. Ouspensky quotes him as admitting, “I will say that, if you like, this is esoteric Christianity.” There seems no reason to reject this when one remembers that Christianity, as Gurdjieff knew it, was the heir of the ages and must have drawn to itself elements from very early pre-Christian traditions, Hittite, Assyrian, Phrygian, Persian; and there is nothing so explosive as old ideas restated in contemporary terms as the Western world was to discover when Gurdjieff burst upon it. His impact was tremendous. It was clear that he had come not to bring peace but a special kind of inner warfare and that his mission in life was to destroy men’s complacency and make them aware of their limitations. Only by such means, by what he called “conscious labours and intentional sufferings,” was it possible to bring about their inner development. The Work, as his method came to be called, had, as it very soon appeared, been only too accurately named. Writers, artists, men from all kinds of professions—among them [Thomas de Hartmann](#), Russian composer, [A. R. Orage](#), editor of *The New Age* and later one of the subtlest commentators of Gurdjieff’s writings, Rowland Kenney of *The Herald*, [Dr. Maurice Nicoll](#), [Jane Heap](#) of *The Little Review*—found themselves digging wells, chopping down trees and breaking stones by day, while at night they were required to take part in the sacred dances, or “Movements,” which were an integral part of the teaching, or assisting at one of Gurdjieff’s great feasts where, under the influence of good food, vodka and the watchful eye of the Master, opportunities were provided, for those who had the courage, to come face to face with themselves. The hardest among them, those who could rise to the level of “being serious,” were allowed to transmit something of the teaching to newer pupils.

By 1924 the Work was sufficiently well established for Gurdjieff to set out on the first of his trips to the United States where in January, in New York, a group of forty pupils gave a series of demonstrations of his Movements. Two thirds of these evenings were devoted to the sacred dances and the last third to what was described as “Trick, Semi-Trick and Real Supernatural Phenomena.” The audience was invited to distinguish between them and reminded that “the study of the first two was held to be indispensable to the study of the third, since to understand the last a perfectly impartial attitude and a judgment not burdened by pre-established beliefs were necessary.” It is clear from Gurdjieff’s writings that hypnotism, mesmerism and various arcane methods of expanding consciousness must have played a large part in the studies of the Seekers of Truth. None of these processes, however, is to be thought of as having any bearing on what is called Black Magic, which, according to Gurdjieff, “has always one definite

characteristic. It is the tendency to use people for some, even the best of aims, without their knowledge and understanding, either by producing in them faith and infatuation or by acting upon them through fear. There is, in fact, neither red, green nor yellow magic. There is ‘doing.’ Only ‘doing’ is magic.” Properly to realise the scale of what Gurdjieff meant by magic, one has to remember his continually repeated aphorism, “Only he who can *be* can do,” and its corollary that, lacking this fundamental verb, nothing is ‘done,’ things simply ‘happen.’

The American tour brought a new influx of pupils to the Prieuré and, as usual, Gurdjieff, by deliberate indirection, set them to find directions out. “The teaching,” writes one, “was given in fragments—often in unexpected ways—and we had to learn to put the pieces together and connect them up through our observations and experiences.” However, the year 1924 was to prove a landmark for the teaching. It was in the late summer that Gurdjieff, slowly reassembling his forces after a near-fatal motor car accident, himself began during convalescence to put together in the form of a book those separated fragments. Work activities were reduced. Gurdjieff, while sustaining those pupils who remained, wrote incessantly, whether at Fontainebleau, or on his frequent motoring trips or seated at a table in the Café de la Paix in Paris where he had long been a familiar figure. [All and Everything](#) the book is called, not inaccurately, since it sets out to cover every aspect of the life of man. Into this vast allegory of [Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson](#), top-heavy from its sheer weight of argument and at the same time soaring off into space, like a great, lumbering flying cathedral, Gurdjieff gathered the fundamentals of his teaching. Man, we are told, has a unique place and function in the cosmological scheme and enters into obligation by the fact of being born. The awareness of all this is not, however, a gift of Nature, neither are Individuality, Consciousness, Free Will and an Immortal Soul—these attributes, which man mistakenly believes he already possesses, have to be acquired by his own special efforts. Above all, the book repeatedly insists that man is asleep. It is only at the moment when he awakens, not merely to consciousness but to conscience—to Gurdjieff the words were, in fact, synonymous—that his true evolution can begin.

The manuscript, constantly revised, now became the focal point of the teaching, not only in France but in New York during his two next American trips, in 1929 and 1933. But in the latter year, with the sale of the Prieuré, Gurdjieff’s life enters another phase. After enjoying for nine years a local habitation and a celebrated name, he appears, clearly for reasons of his own—for Gurdjieff never stood still, he was always growing, always experimenting, always searching—to retire into the shadows. “He is no longer teaching,” said his older pupils when new people wanted to make direct contact with him. But one of his pet tenets was that the Work was not designed to discover something new but to recover that which is lost. An intrepid few, a handful of Homers attempting to chart the course of Odysseus, set out to do just that. If he accepted them, they were put into small intimate groups, each member depending upon the others, like mountain climbers upon a rope, and no group had any connection with the others. This was in keeping with Gurdjieff’s earlier work in Moscow when Ouspensky quotes him as saying that he never mixed groups but occupied each with a different work “according to the state of their preparation and their powers.” When one remembers that Gurdjieff’s teaching was essentially intimate and personal, his insistence that by the very nature of the Work he could not have many pupils appears valid and inevitable. The published reminiscences of various members of these small groups bear witness to the fact that he was, indeed, teaching in the thirties, but quietly, as though it were a question of *reculer pour*

mieux sauter,¹ And as usual he was careful not to let his right hand know what his left was doing. Those who knew the Teacher could gather only by rumour and hearsay that there were other Gurdjieff's—the healer of psychic illnesses, the one who could cure alcoholism, Gurdjieff the business man, and the Gurdjieff known as “Monsieur Bonbon,” an old eccentric gentleman whose sole mission in life, it appeared, was to dispense candy to local cronies and children. None of the latter could have guessed when, in May 1939, “Monsieur Bonbon” could not be found, that it was because somebody called “Mister Gurdjieff” had once again gone to America, a country he held in affectionate regard because of its “brotherliness.” On his return to Paris war was at hand and with the outbreak of hostilities Gurdjieff disappeared from the sight of all but his French pupils until the Liberation. It is said that he sustained himself through those lean years by putting about the rumour that he was heir to a Texas oil well. Nobody was more surprised than the French shopkeepers to find, when his British and American pupils streamed back and paid the bills, that the story was essentially true.

The year 1946 marked the beginning of the last phase of his teaching, a period that for those who had known him earlier was richer than any that had gone before. For a little over three years new adherents and old pupils bringing their own pupils and children, flocked to his small crowded room to listen to a reading of one of his manuscripts—*All and Everything, Meetings With Remarkable Men, Life Is Real Only When I Am*—to hear him play on his small hand accordion the music he had composed for the different chapters, or to sit at his table and receive the bounty of his teaching in whatever form it might be given. “If take, then take!” was one of his favourite aphorisms—no sipping, no trifling—and for many the special nourishment that was offered in addition to the delicious edibles was indigestible, hard to stomach. The exotic flavours and the vodka in which the famous “Toasts to the Idiots” were drunk (Gr. *idiotes*, private person, that which in myself I am) did not make things easier. But easiness was not the aim. The patriarchal host, massive of presence, radiating a serene power at once formidable and reassuring, dispensed this “food” in various ways, always unexpected; sometimes in thunderclaps of rage, sometimes telling a story that only one of all the table would know was meant for himself, sometimes merely by look or gesture thrusting home the truth. Masks were stripped off mercilessly. Beneath the exacting benevolence of his gaze everyone was naked. But occasionally, for those who could face their situation Gurdjieff, always fleetingly, would let his own mask fall. It was possible then to see that behind the apparent mercilessness stood sorrow and compassion. At such moments his “humanity-ness”—a key word in his odd English vocabulary—would radiantly declare itself. If his aim was to teach men how to rise to the possibility of saying “I am,” he never forgot that “Thou art” and “He is” complete the conjugation.

In addition to all this energy of work in his own apartment, Gurdjieff now instituted at the Salle Pleyel daily practices of the Movements, the sacred dances that were so essential a part of his teaching. It was not only in Paris, however, that the Work year by year so vigourously progressed. There were groups already in England and the United States and others were now established in Holland, Sweden, Germany and South America. And in New York, in 1949, on January 13th, his name day, Gurdjieff, on what was to be his last trip to America, announced that he was now ready to publish *All and Everything*. At the same time, those English disciples who, after Ouspensky's death in 1947, had joined the Paris groups, arranged for the publication of *In Search of the Miraculous*, Ouspensky's long-withheld account of his early years with Gurdjieff. These two books, the first giving to the second an added dimension and the

second clarifying the first, opened up the teaching. Gurdjieff now belonged to the world for the brief time that was left him. His health was faltering, but such was his powerhouse of inner strength that few could be brought to believe it. Throughout the summer, after his return from New York, the Work went on with added intensity. Gurdjieff, while serenely putting his own house in order, used every moment as a moment of teaching and each aspect of his fading strength as a reminding factor for his pupils that “man must live till he dies.” To “live” in Gurdjieff’s sense, was consciously to labour and voluntarily to suffer. This he himself did, with constancy and deliberation, until the 29th of October, 1949.

Since his death his work has been continued by his chosen pupils and groups are to be found everywhere in the Western world. The Movements have been accurately documented in a series of films; his second book, *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, has been published and the third is in preparation.² The siftings of time are likely to prove that these records are his proper monument. In them the man and his myth are one. Those who seek him there may repeatedly discern a single, authentic anonymous footprint. It seems a fitting recognition of his role that Gurdjieff’s grave in Avon, near Fontainebleau, is bare of any name.

Notes

1. Retreat in order to advance. [Ed.]
2. The ‘Third Series’ *Life is Real Only Then, When ‘I Am.’* was issued privately in 1975 and publicly in 1981. [Ed.]

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This essay was published by *Traditional Studies Press*, Toronto: 1973, as a ten page pamphlet. It was previously issued as “Gurdjieff” in *Man, Myth and Magic: Encyclopedia of the Supernatural*, London: Purnell, 1970–1971, serialized in 111 issues, then bound as 12 volumes. Also issued by Time / Life in New York. And published here with the kind permission of the Trustees of the Estate of P. L. Travers.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Gurdjieff

The Unknown Man

by [Kenneth Walker, M. D.](#)

The Russian philosopher [P. D. Ouspensky](#) illustrated the difficulty of recognizing a teacher of esoteric knowledge, with two stories. The first told of a German who journeyed to India in search of a *guru* and returned without having found one. He had not realized that the native servant who looked after him while he was in that country was the man for whom he was seeking. The second story referred to a dealer in parrots living in Bordeaux, who, quite unbeknown to his fellow townsmen, was a teacher of esoteric knowledge.

But what is esoteric, or hidden, knowledge? It is a term which has been badly mishandled and which has been used to describe everything from the irresponsible utterances of so-called occult societies to genuine esoteric knowledge. The term should mean immediate, or direct, knowledge, as opposed to mediate, or indirect, knowledge, or knowledge which has been reached through the mediation of the special senses.

Some people repudiate the idea that direct knowledge of this nature exists and maintain that all knowledge must come indirectly through the special senses. Bertrand Russell is one of these, and in his *History of Western Philosophy* he goes out of his way to point out that there is no method of attaining knowledge other than that used by the scientist. Having had no personal experience of the contemplative method, it is of course natural that he should make this statement.

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It is not my intention to deal with this epistemological question. I shall assume that esoteric knowledge exists and shall discuss Ouspensky's statement that teachers of this knowledge are usually difficult to recognize. I shall do so because the two stories with which he illustrates his thesis are of great interest when they are taken in conjunction with Ouspensky's account of his own search for a teacher.

Even as a schoolboy Ouspensky was interested in the idea of the miraculous, and as he grew to manhood his interest increased. When he was working as a journalist on the staff of a Moscow paper, his desk was

stacked with books with such strange titles as *Life After Death*, *Dogma et Rituel de la Haute Magie*, *The Sincere Narrations of a Pilgrim*, and many others of a kindred nature.

A few years later he began experimenting on himself in the hope that by altering his state of consciousness he would be able to gain knowledge of a kind different from that which one acquires in an ordinary state. The difficulty was to discover how this change of consciousness could be brought about.

He knew that drugs such as opium and hashish produced a change and experimented with hashish. But the method was unreliable and he soon became dissatisfied with it, although it allowed him “to look over the garden wall,” as he called it. It was clear that something was missing, something that he needed before he could go any further with his experiments in changes of consciousness.

“I know it is not a dream,” he stated. “In these experiments and experiences there is a taste of reality which cannot be imitated and about which one cannot make a mistake. I know that *all This is there*. I have become convinced of it. *Unity exists*. But how to link what is above with what is below?”

Something, as Ouspensky rightly said, was missing, something had to be known before he could go further. “I feel,” he continued, “that a method is necessary.... And more and more often I begin to think that this method can be given by those schools of yogis and Sufis about which one reads and hears.” (P. D. Ouspensky, *A New Model of the Universe*.)

He allowed nothing to stand in the way of finding a method by which he could overcome the difficulties he had encountered, and a few years later he abandoned work on a book he was writing and went East. This was in 1913, an unpropitious date for such a journey as his, for the Kaiser was displaying a bellicose spirit and was building an ominously large navy for Germany.

In 1914 the storm broke over Europe, and without having had time to find what he had been seeking, Ouspensky was compelled to hurry home, comforting himself with the thought that he would return to the East. Two years later and in the most unlikely quarter—the old city of Moscow in his own country—he discovered what he had failed to find in Ceylon and India. He found Gurdjieff. Or did Gurdjieff find him? It is difficult to say. Gurdjieff had a wonderful capacity for giving the appearance of accident to what he had deliberately contrived.

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What happened in Moscow in 1916 is narrated in Ouspensky’s later book *In Search of the Miraculous*. He recounts how, while he was giving lectures in Moscow on the subject of his prewar Eastern journey, a friend persuaded him to meet a certain Caucasian Greek, the leader of a Moscow group that was engaged in various “occult” studies and experiments.

“Persuaded” is the correct word, for on principle Ouspensky was suspicious of groups engaged in parlour yogi-tricks. He was therefore inclined to be extremely critical of this group and its teacher, but eventually

he agreed to meet him at a small café. In his posthumous book he writes:

I remember this meeting very well, I saw a man of oriental type, no longer young, with a black moustache and piercing eyes, who astonished me first of all because he seemed to be disguised and completely out of keeping with the place and its atmosphere.... And this man with the face of an Indian rajah or an Arab sheik, whom I at once seemed to see in a white burnous or a gilded turban, seated here in this little café where small dealers and commission agents met together, in a black overcoat with a velvet collar and bowler hat, produced the strange, unexpected and almost alarming impression of a man poorly disguised, the sight of whom embarrasses you because you see he is not what he pretends to be, yet you have to speak and behave as though you did not see it. He spoke Russian incorrectly with a strong Caucasian accent; and this accent, with which we are accustomed to associate anything apart from philosophical ideas, strengthened still further the strangeness and unexpectedness of the impression....

He sat on a sofa, with one leg tucked beneath him, drinking black coffee from a tumbler, smoking and sometimes glancing at me. I liked his movements, which had a great deal of a kind of feline grace and assurance; even to his silence there was something which distinguished him from others.

I have quoted this account of Ouspensky's first meeting with Gurdjieff at length because I want to compare his first impressions with my own on meeting Gurdjieff, some thirty years later. Not that our situations were similar, for whereas Gurdjieff was a stranger to Ouspensky, I was familiar with both his ideas and his methods and had been studying them for a quarter of a century. Although I had never met him, I had long ago accepted him as a great teacher. But we all have our preconceived notions of what a great teacher should look like and how he should speak and behave, and Gurdjieff did not fit into the pigeonhole I had prepared for him.

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When I met him in 1948 Gurdjieff was living in a flat in Rue du Colonel Reynard, near the Arc de Triomphe, Paris. It was a small flat suited to the needs of a small French bourgeois family, and its furnishings were not to my taste.

We—and by “we” I mean those many people who were now studying his ideas—were crowded into a tiny drawing room and were either perched uncomfortably on small wooden stools or else were squatting on the floor, listening to a reading from a manuscript entitled [*Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*](#).



The words were difficult to follow, and as sentences sometimes sprawled inelegantly over a quarter of

the page of the manuscript from which one of us was reading, my attention often wandered toward the door leading into the lobby.

What kind of man would push open that glass-panelled door before the reading had finished? I had been led to expect that he would eventually join us, and it was as had been foretold. At the end of an hour's reading the door moved forward a foot, stopped there for a full minute, and then was opened wide to admit Gurdjieff.

He stood there, looked around the room, his dark eyes taking everybody in, and then sat down on the chair that had been left vacant for him. Oriental, yes, for even without the tall *kalmak* that he was wearing nobody could have mistaken him for a Westerner. "Dark piercing eyes" as Ouspensky had described? No, they were dark, but kindly rather than piercing, eyes that noted everything without staring, eyes which were very much alive, but not piercing. What struck me more forcibly than the eyes was the height of the brow and the fact that although Gurdjieff was said to be over eighty years of age there was not a line on his face.

Gurdjieff believed very strongly in the good effect that eating together has on personal relationships, and the sharing of meals, cooked by himself, was a daily ritual in his flat.

It was in the small dining room into which we crowded an hour later that I was able to examine him more closely, and as I had the good fortune to sit directly opposite him, separated only by the breadth of a narrow table, I was in an excellent position to follow his every movement. And some things unusual in these movements immediately struck me.

Here was an old man, and old men are inclined to hesitate and to fumble; not only were these signs of old age entirely absent, but Gurdjieff possessed an extraordinary control over his body.

He was preparing a salad for us and was cutting slices off a cucumber, fishing for small onions in a bottle, dividing up gourds, and he was doing all this with the assurance of a skilled surgeon engaged in his favorite operation. The whole work of preparing the salad was done without one false or unnecessary movement. It was also done speedily, but without any vestige of hurry.

Nor was this the only evidence of his mastery over his body, for I had already noticed his movements as he entered the drawing room and again when he had preceded us into the dining room at the end of the reading. He was a heavy man with a very protuberant abdomen, yet he had moved with the quietness and smoothness of a cat. A cat, yes; Ouspensky had been right in talking about this "feline grace," and although thirty-odd years had passed, his movements were still pleasing to watch.

The meal proceeded. It resembled an oriental feast rather than a European dinner. The dishes were strange to me and I often had no knowledge of what I was eating. The vodka was fiery and, to one who never took more than an occasional glass of wine, exceedingly difficult to swallow. I had been warned, however, that the toasts were obligatory, and knowing, as I did, that one had to pay for everything one

received, I gulped it down bravely.

Gurdjieff spoke in a mixture of English, Russian and French, and even if I had not been obliged to swallow vodka I would have had difficulty in understanding him. But what an astonishing man he was!

Now that the *kalmak* had been removed, the full splendor of his clean-shaven head was fully revealed to me. It rose to an immense height above the level of his ears, reaching its zenith halfway between the frontal region and the occiput. His olive-coloured face was as smooth, forceful and serene as that of the Lohan figure which had impressed me so at the recent Chinese exhibition in London. The dark eyes rested on me momentarily from time to time, and in that brief glance he seemed to have absorbed all that there was to be learned about me.

“But why,” he suddenly asked of me, “why do you not eat more? Do you not like the food? Here, I give you something very special,” and he handed me, between finger and thumb, a small piece of dried sturgeon.

“I like it very much,” I answered him, “but you see I have just arrived from England and—”

“Ah, yes, in England everyone is starved. What is it named?” A word was suggested by somebody farther down the table. “Yes, they are rationed. They pick here and pick there,” and he enacted so faithfully a sparrow picking up crumbs that I seemed to see it hopping about among the dishes. He was an excellent mimic, and he used the gift frequently in revealing to us our own personalities.

Dish followed dish, toast followed toast, and finally to my immense relief, came coffee and cigarettes. There had been a great deal of laughter and too much to eat and drink, but all the time he had been watching us and teaching us, even while joking. Nothing had happened accidentally; everything had been deliberately contrived by him. With a few words, a gesture, or by the mimicry of some personal peculiarity that someone was trying vainly to hide, he had been showing us to ourselves.

I fully realized at this, my first, meal in his flat the futility of any pretence. It was utterly useless to pretend to be otherwise than one was. “You are turkey cock trying to be peacock,” he had said to somebody during the meal, and when I glanced at the person I realized how fitting the remark was. So, apparently had the person to whom it had been made, for his manner immediately changed.

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That was the first of many visits to the flat in the Rue du Colonel Reynard, and of many meals in the company of those who had come to Paris to learn wisdom from the man whose silence “was unlike the silence of anyone else.”

What varied company it was that squeezed, elbow to elbow, around his table: supporters from America, including the widow of a world-famous tenor; English and French doctors; businessmen and lawyers; a

British peer; Americans, British, French and Russians of different classes, education and upbringing, and all of whom were held together by their mutual respect for this man who seemed to radiate power from his person.

No one can be so different from his fellow men or can flout convention so freely as Gurdjieff flouted it, without arousing hostility. All sorts of things were said about him: that he cast a hypnotic spell over his followers and fleeced them (and in a sense this was true); that he was a black magician and an irreligious and unscrupulous man. It is quite understandable that such reports as these should have been spread, for he was utterly ruthless in carrying out his mission—to attack without pity all that stood in the way of man's spiritual development.

Gurdjieff used to say that a man revealed himself most clearly in his reactions to sexuality and to money. I could add yet another signpost to a man's personality, namely, his reaction to Gurdjieff himself. Many reactions were possible, but it was impossible to be indifferent to him or to forget that he was there. One could be disturbed by him, dislike him, be scandalized by what he did and said, deem him a charlatan or a wise man, be frightened of him or grow fond of him, and one could do all these things in turn; but it was impossible to neglect him. Whatever he was, he was something on a much bigger scale than one had ever seen before, or is ever likely to see again.

Gurdjieff had a very wide range of knowledge, which embraced modern Western scientific theories as well as the special knowledge he had learned in his years of wandering in the East. But it was not so much what he said or what he did that impressed as what he *was*. Gurdjieff was a living example of the outcome of his own teaching, which he summed up in the words "the harmonious development of man."

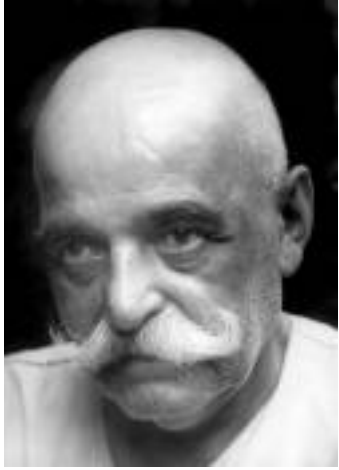
Man, he said, was an unfinished product. Nature had evolved him up to a certain stage and had then left him to his own devices, to struggle to a higher level of consciousness, or to remain as he was, an incomplete being. The distinguishing mark of Gurdjieff is the distinguishing mark of all great teachers. They are remarkable for their *being*, for what they *are*, rather than what they *do*. And it is this which makes it difficult to recognize them, for here in the West we grade men by what they do, not by what they have achieved in their own persons.

There is no need to be surprised, therefore, that Ouspensky's German returned from India without having found a teacher, or that his dealer in parrots had no local following in Bordeaux.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

The Patriarch Goes West

by William Segal

Animated by an essentially pragmatic point of view, Americans were immediately attracted to the ideas of Gurdjieff. What could have spoken more forcefully to a people formed by a tradition of practical realism, disdainful of mere theory, and not hemmed in by abstract principles, than this teaching which had daily life for a field of application?...

[The complete text is available in the [printed copy](#) of this issue.]

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

To Recognize a Master

by [Henriette Lannes](#)

[At a meeting in London on 29th October 1957, the anniversary of Mr. Gurdjieff's death, Mme de Salzmann posed a question for everyone present: "How do we recognize a Master?" In response to the question, a number of those who had been with Mr. Gurdjieff spoke of the experience. The last person to do so was Mme Lannes. The following is a transcript of what she said.]

When I first heard the ideas of Mr. Gurdjieff's teaching from [Jeanne de Salzmann](#), nothing had yet been published and the name of Gurdjieff was quite unknown to me. At that time I was not looking for a master, although I had always been full of questions. The idea of a real teaching and a true master had never occurred to me. I did not believe such a thing could exist, at least in our own time.

When I heard the ideas I was dumbfounded. I could not get them out of my mind. They haunted me day and night. I felt they were true....

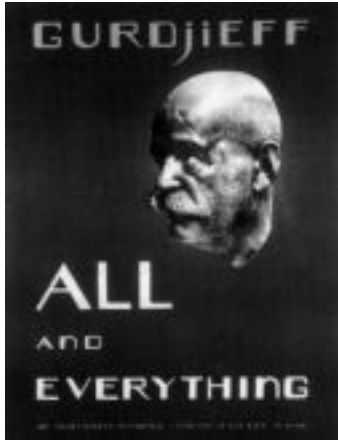
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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

ALL AND EVERYTHING

Ten Books in Three Series

by G. I. Gurdjieff

[FIRST SERIES](#): *Three books under the title of “An Objectively Impartial Criticism of the Life of Man,” or, “Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson.”*

[SECOND SERIES](#): *Three books under the common title of “Meetings with Remarkable Men.”*

[THIRD SERIES](#): *Four books under the common title of “Life is Real Only Then, When ‘I Am.’”*

All written according to entirely new principles of logical reasoning and strictly directed towards the solution of the following three cardinal problems:

FIRST SERIES: To destroy, mercilessly, without any compromises whatsoever, in the mentation and feelings of the reader, the beliefs and views, by centuries rooted in him, about everything existing in the world.

SECOND SERIES: To acquaint the reader with the material required for a new creation and to prove the soundness and good quality of it.

THIRD SERIES: To assist the arising, in the mentation and in the feelings of the reader, of a veritable, non-fantastic representation not of that illusory world which he now perceives, but of the world existing in reality.

Friendly Advice

[Written impromptu by the author on delivering this book, already prepared for publication, to the printer.]

ACCORDING TO the numerous deductions and conclusions made by me during experimental elucidations concerning the productivity of the perception by contemporary people of new impressions from what is heard and read, and also according to the thought of one of the sayings of popular wisdom I have just remembered, handed down to our days from very ancient times, which declares: “Any prayer may be heard by the Higher Powers and a corresponding answer obtained only if it is uttered thrice:

Firstly—for the welfare or the peace of the souls of one’s parents.
Secondly—for the welfare of one’s neighbor.
And only thirdly—for oneself personally.”

I find it necessary on the first page of this book, quite ready for publication, to give the following advice: “Read each of my written expositions thrice:

Firstly—at least as you have already become mechanized to read all your contemporary books and newspapers.
Secondly—as if you were reading aloud to another person.
And only thirdly—try and fathom the gist of my writings.”

Only then will you be able to count upon forming your own impartial judgment, proper to yourself alone, on my writings. And only then can my hope be actualized that according to your understanding you will obtain the specific benefit for yourself which I anticipate, and which I wish for you with all my being.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

An Introduction to the Writings of G. I. Gurdjieff

by J. Walter Driscoll

[All and Everything](#) is the inclusive title Gurdjieff gave to the three volumes of his major writings. Gurdjieff referred to these as the First, Second and Third Series.

[1. Beelzebub's Tales To His Grandson](#)

On first readings this gargantuan and rigorous book is intimidating, even for readers accustomed to digesting complex text. It does not yield its treasures to premature or superficial analysis, and one should not be defeated by its seemingly impenetrable obscurity or misled by the fact that although it takes the form of a ground breaking science-fiction novel, *Beelzebub's Tales* is really a vehicle for great philosophical, religious and psychological ideas and insights. The book's barriers and complexities are never the result of mere literary posturing. It is labyrinthine for several reasons: because of the scope, depth and interrelatedness of what Gurdjieff attempts, because of its mythic proportions and the epic elements that flesh out its structure, because the many profound and disturbing ideas it contains elude easy comprehension. The serious reader heeds Gurdjieff's seemingly pompous but truly "friendly advice" that it is only with the third complete reading that one can actually *begin* to "try and fathom the gist." What Gurdjieff attempts is nothing less than what his immodestly titled series of books proposes to present; that is, all and everything that really matters.

The main title of this first series, *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson: An Objectively Impartial Criticism of the Life of Man*, is the center around which the book's structure pivots. Traveling across the universe on the transspace ship Karnak with his grandson Hassein, Beelzebub undertakes to further the boy's education. Hassein is a sensitive, intelligent and inquisitive twelve-year old. During their extended journey, Hassein questions Beelzebub extensively about the strange three-brained beings who inhabit a small planet of the remote solar system to which Beelzebub was banished as a result of his youthful rebelliousness. Hassein struggles to understand why the three-brained beings of that planet take "the ephemeral for the Real." Since Beelzebub exists on a time-scale that spans thousands of Earth-years and was banished to Mars for aeons, his exile provides him with the opportunity to closely observe the

inhabitants of our planet. Beelzebub tells his tales and uses these observations of Earth from his observatory on Mars and from six extended descents to Earth, seemingly to instruct Hassein but in fact to offer us impartial criticism of our life.

This plot structure provides Gurdjieff with an epic platform that is poised between a fifty page introductory chapter titled “The Arousing of Thought” and an equally long, final chapter “From the Author.” In these extended chapters, Gurdjieff speaks to the reader in his own voice. Near the end, Gurdjieff finally makes reference—and then, in characteristic fashion, only in passing—to our dwindled capacity to concentrate our “active attention” and our dependence on the flow of “automatic associations.” He indicates that the flow of “automatic associations” within us takes the place of what he calls “active being mentation” and that the attentive reading of his book can help us to develop this latent function.

Hyperbole reduces to understatement in relation to *Beelzebub’s Tales*. Unique in so many ways, this may be the only book written where the author carefully studied his audience’s reaction so thoroughly over more than two decades and redrafted the book with these observations in mind. Nothing in this book or in the reader’s response is accidental. *Beelzebub’s Tales* remains, as Gurdjieff surely intended, the first meeting ground for anyone interested in directly acquainting themselves with him and his ideas.

Beelzebub’s Tales was first published as *All and Everything: Ten books in three series of which this is the First Series* in New York by Harcourt Brace in 1950 with 1238 pages and in London by Routledge & Kegan Paul in 1950 with 1238 pages. Except for title variations—which consist of rearrangements of the phrases *All and Everything*, *Beelzebub’s Tales* and *An Objectively Impartial Criticism of the Life of Man*—the ongoing correction of errata and the inclusion of two paragraphs omitted from the 1st edition, the text of the book has remained as first published by Gurdjieff in 1950. This text has since been reissued in hardcover and paperback editions by Dutton, Routledge & Kegan and most recently in 1999 by Penguin / Arkana in a paperback edition with cumulative correction of very minor errors in past printings. The exception is *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson: An Objectively Impartial Criticism of the Life of Man*. *All and Everything / First Series*. [Revised Edition] published in New York and London by Viking Arkana in 1992 with 1135 pages and issued without editorial preface or description of its purpose, method or sources. This revision is in more accessible contemporary English than its predecessor. It is based largely on the French translation of 1956 and incorporates new study of the original Russian manuscript; both of which are somewhat different in places than the English text.

2. Meetings With Remarkable Men

Revised from Orage’s unpublished editor’s manuscript and the original Russian manuscripts, Gurdjieff’s autobiography opens with a thirty page introduction in which he discusses literature as one of the chief means for developing the mind “that chief impeller to self-perfection” and laments the corruption of contemporary literature in relation to this purpose. He confides to the reader that he had become “adroit in the art of concealing serious thoughts in an enticing, easily grasped outer form.” The ten chapters that follow are, on the surface, devoted to describing Gurdjieff’s family, his school teachers, friends and the

companions who shared his quest for knowledge and understanding. Underlying the outer form of Gurdjieff's engaging personal narrative—few of the details of which can now be verified after more than a hundred years—is the story of his resolute search for a psychospiritual wisdom tradition that could lead to knowledge based on the development of being and to “the material required for a new creation.” The final unnumbered chapter is an addendum that contains the extended narrative called “The Material Question” in which Gurdjieff responds frankly to a question about how his extensive searches and the Institute he led were financed. In responding, he describes the ingenuity, versatility and sustained initiative he had to exercise—as well as the considerable financial burden involved—in achieving his aims.

Meetings with Remarkable Men was first published in New York by Dutton in 1963 with 303 pages and in London by Routledge & Kegan Paul in 1963 with 303 pages. The text has been reissued several times in paperback, most recently in London & New York by Penguin Arkana in 1985.

3. Life Is Real Only Then When “I Am”

A fragmentary work that contains Gurdjieff's most interior ponderings in *All and Everything*. It consists of a prologue and introduction that take up almost half of the book; followed by five brief lectures. The final chapter titled “The Inner and Outer World of Man” breaks off in mid-sentence and is, according to John G. Bennett (one of Gurdjieff's literary executors), the last thing Gurdjieff wrote. Drawing on autobiographical material from his decades of searching as well as from his work with groups in Europe and particularly in America with his student and friend, A. R. Orage, Gurdjieff hints at the practices, struggles and intense suffering that is necessary to realize a representation “of the world existing in reality.”

Life is Real Only Then, When “I Am” was first privately printed with a foreword by Jeanne de Salzmann and a prefatory note by Valentin Anastasieff in New York by Triangle Editions in 1975 with 170 pages. The 2nd edition, which includes ten additional pages from the French 1976 edition, was first privately published in New York by Triangle Editions in 1978 with 177 pages. It was reissued by Routledge & Kegan Paul in 1981, by Dutton in 1982, and most recently in paperback by Penguin Arkana in 1991.

Gurdjieff's Writings: Supplementary

Views from the Real World: *Early Talks in Moscow, Essentuki, Tiflis, Berlin, London, Paris, New York and Chicago As Recollected by His Pupils.* Foreword by Jeanne de Salzmann. New York: Dutton, 1973, 284 pages; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973, 284 pages; Abridged with a new introduction, New York: Dutton, 1975, 276 pages; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976, 276 pages, London and New York: Arkana, 1984, 276 pages.

Notes on forty (thirty-nine in the paperback edition) talks Gurdjieff gave between 1914 and 1930. The introduction to the paperback edition indicates that “The *Talks* have been compared and regrouped with

the help of Madame de Hartmann, who from 1917 in Essentuki was present at all these meetings and could thus guarantee their authenticity.” These notes provide a vital record of the fluid, ‘search-demanding,’ approach inherent in the oral tradition Gurdjieff emerged from and maintained. They supplement his writings and provide a glimpse of a teaching that is to be practiced and not merely grasped as information. Also contains the article “Glimpses of the Truth,” the account of a conversation with Gurdjieff, that Ouspensky first read in 1915 and quoted in his *In Search of the Miraculous*.

In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching. By P. D. Ouspensky. New York: Harcourt Brace; 1949, 399 pages, index; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950, 399 pages, index; has been reissued in paperback numerous times.

This precise and vivid record of Gurdjieff’s talks in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Essentuki between 1915 and 1918 was undertaken by P. D. Ouspensky in 1925 with Gurdjieff’s approval. The oldest manuscript dates from 1925 but Ouspensky continued to work on it into the 1930s when it was read to his groups. By his decision, it remained unpublished at his death in 1947, perhaps because he refused to allow publication of any information about ‘the system’ during his lifetime. The virtually completed manuscript was brought to Gurdjieff’s attention by Mme Ouspensky and with his encouragement, published in the autumn of 1949. Although it covers parallel ground in places, it’s lecture and dialogue format affords striking contrast with Gurdjieff’s epic mythologizing in *Beelzebub’s Tales*.

Film Adaptation

Meetings with Remarkable Men: a film directed by Peter Brook [and Jeanne de Salzmann]. New York: Remar Productions, 1979, [1 hr. 50 min.]; VHS Video release with the variant subtitle: ***Gurdjieff’s Search for Hidden Knowledge***. New York: Society for the Study of Myth and Tradition, 1997, a Parabola Video Release.

Filmed in close collaboration with Jeanne de Salzmann, the film encapsulates the story told in Gurdjieff’s autobiography of his youthful quest throughout the Middle East for contact with ancient wisdom traditions and a definite understanding of the purpose of human life. It ends with an arresting demonstration of Gurdjieff’s Movements, the only authentic demonstration that is publicly available.

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This synopsis is drawn from the author’s [Gurdjieff: a Reading Guide](#) which describes Gurdjieff’s writings and some eighty key books about him.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Gurdjieff Observed

by Roger Lipsey

There is a primary literature by and about Gurdjieff, easily found by anyone who asks who he was and what he thought. More difficult to find, there is also an unexpectedly rich secondary literature written for the most part by his pupils.¹ If the reader encounters in Gurdjieff's own writings and in [P. D. Ouspensky's](#) *In Search of the Miraculous* a virtually canonical presentation of the master's life and ideas, he or she will find in this secondary literature something more like a composite journal in many voices. Some of these voices are exceptionally warm and poignant—for example, Katherine Mansfield's in 1922, Kathryn Hulme's recalling Gurdjieff in the 1930s—while others are marked with the high seriousness and middling clumsiness of the apprentice. [Dr. Kenneth Walker](#), a British physician who encountered Gurdjieff in the late 1940s, speaks with the clarity of a well-trained mind of this man who helped him press against the limits of mind alone. René Zuber, a filmmaker of quiet wit and an immense capacity for wonder, evokes the Gurdjieff he knew. With consummate storytelling art, Fritz Peters recalls Gurdjieff's cunning and deeply affectionate approach to children. These are only some of the voices to which we might listen. Within this less familiar secondary literature, there emerges a primary image of Gurdjieff as a teacher and as a man, and of the demanding conditions he created daily for his pupils.

Admittedly, to be a pupil is a humble thing; it involves a declaration of need, a deliberate willingness to “hear and obey,” as the old Islamic phrase puts it. Yet many of these pupils of Gurdjieff were—and are—men and women of independent accomplishment. What one hears in them is not the constraint of the permanent pupil but the recognition of children, now adult, for their spiritual father. Gurdjieff taught “the examined life” in its full Socratic sense, and those who studied with him did not neglect to turn their growing powers of examination upon their teacher. Gurdjieff, the observer, was observed—from his first appearance as a teacher in Moscow and St. Petersburg in 1912 to his last days in Paris, October, 1949.

Who was he? One answer that emerges in the composite journal of his pupils is: an expensive saint. [Kathryn Hulme](#), author of *The Nun's Story* (1956), was one of a small group of women who worked with Gurdjieff in Paris in the 1930s. She recalls that one day he told them of a worldly problem that confronted him:

We were aware how often his seemingly jocose remarks lifted suddenly to another level of

understanding and listened attentively to his tale of a brand new car he might be able to get with no down payment whatsoever—a deal so unique that he thought he should have some help to see it through. He asked if any of us had a special saint to whom he might burn a candle, looking first to Miss Gordon, our senior, for a suggestion. She named a saint noted for granting requests, but the master shook his head. He knew all about that one. “No,” he said, “it must be a saint who would be indulgent *for one of us*.” One of us in the Work ... his eyes searched our blank faces, then he shrugged.

“If you cannot suggest such a one,” he said, “I could just as well take my own saint—Saint George. But he is a very *expensive* saint. He is not interested in money, or in merchandise like candles. He wishes *suffering* for merchandise, an *inner-world* thing. He is interested only when I *make something* for my inner world; he *always* knows. But ... such suffering is expensive.”²

The image as he develops it may be St. George, but it is most certainly George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff, who at all stages of his life as a teacher asked much of his pupils and taught them how to make inner-world offerings.

He was an expensive saint who came from a great distance. In his autobiography, [Meetings with Remarkable Men](#) (1963), he evoked the remote places in now distant times where he went in search of an utterly persuasive and practical knowledge “of all and everything.” Here and there, in the humble secondary literature, one finds further hints of impressions he received in a now lost religious landscape that shaped his sense of what is right and normal among human beings. The witness is again Kathryn Hulme, the moment New Year’s Eve, 1936:

He was sitting on his divan and nodded as we filed past him and found places around the Christmas tree. He seemed rested... He asked Canary [in later years, Gurdjieff customarily gave special names to his pupils] to put out all the lights and to plug in the contact that lit the tree. We sat in silence for several minutes. Then Gurdjieff said: “This I like. Such tree makes you quiet, peaceful inside. It is like sitting before an open fire. *Coziness*.”

The mirror over the mantel reflected the tree’s colored lights. Wendy whispered, “I see two trees ...” and started our master talking about reflected light, a chapter out of his unknown past.

“It would be better if it was candlelight,” he said. “Candlelight blends better; electricity does not blend. But the most beautiful light *I* know, is the light I saw many times in Persia. They make a clay cup, fill it with mutton fat, put twist of cotton in, and this they burn for holiday, fete, wedding. This light burns longer than any other kind of light—even for two days one such small cup will burn. And *such* light—the most beautiful for blending. For Mohammedan fete, once I saw a whole house lit by such lights ... such brightness you

cannot imagine, it was like day. You have seen Bengal lights? This I speak about was even more bright. For man, it is the best light for reading ...” A note of nostalgia for the Near East came into his voice. “In Persia, they even arrange rooms for such light. Once I saw one I can never forget. They hang mirrors everywhere, even floors and ceilings have mirrors—then around, in special places to make decoration, they put such clay cups with mutton fat, and when you see—it makes the head spin. Wherever you look, you see lights, endless, thousands. You cannot imagine how it was. Only, one must *see*—and when you see you would never imagine that such a beautiful sight comes from such small idiot thing as this clay cup of mutton fat....”

“One other thing about such lights,” he went on, “is most original. When they make them with frozen fat, this they put together in layers, each layer with a special perfume, with separations between layers so that when they burn—first you smell, then the room fills with *one* perfume; after half an hour with another, and then another—*all planned exact!* Such knowledge they had before ... such candles they made *consciously* and everybody had them. *Such was life then!* Now ... they make them automatically ...”

A sadness settled over our spirit after he had spoken, as so often happened when he made a glowing picture of how man once was—simple, unspoiled, aware of his soul and its needs.³

A Composite Portrait

Given the riches of his nature, evident even in this simple evocation of memories, it remains surprising that Gurdjieff was not famous in his lifetime. Today, some fifty years after his death, he occupies an honorable but marginal position in the history of twentieth-century culture as commonly conceived. True, in his lifetime he experienced from time to time “fifteen minutes of fame”—the theatrical presentations of Sacred Dances which he staged in Paris and a number of American cities in 1923–24 attracted attention, his [Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man](#) at Fontainebleau-Avon in the 1920s led to journalists’ investigations of those whom they were pleased to call “the forest philosophers”—but in general he conducted his life and work privately, and actively discouraged the unreliable scrutiny of journalists and all others who create reputations. René Zuber witnessed one of these episodes of “active discouragement” in the 1940s at Gurdjieff’s apartment, 6 rue des Colonels Renards, a few steps from Avenue Carnot which mounts, lamp-post by lamp-post, to the Place de l’Étoile:

... journalists. He always kept them at bay and would not allow them to cross his door.

One day I was present when the following scene took place. Two young men had had the nerve to force their way in and, presenting their press cards, declared that they were on the editorial staff of a well-known newspaper. Someone went to announce them to Mr. Gurdjieff but, before they had even had time to take three steps into the hall, he

appeared in person and chased them out as if they were vermin.

That he braved the power of the press on every occasion is one thing. But on top of that, when his pupils went to the trouble of bringing a world-famous personality to him, expecting such an encounter to result in some kind of mutual recognition at least, more often than not things would turn out contrary to their wishes. After a fairly good start the important holder of the Légion d'Honneur would suddenly feel himself in a situation which no longer tallied with his idea of himself. He would get out of his depth and go to pieces....

If good-natured souls like myself could not bear such a sight—never mind! One does not become adult without undergoing such trials.⁴

Like Diogenes in ancient Greece, Gurdjieff dwelt at the margin by choice. In a century when intellectuals have prized difficulty—difficult texts like *Ulysses*, difficult theories like deconstruction, difficult technologies of all description—Gurdjieff was still too difficult, perhaps because he presented not just an intellectual but a moral and existential difficulty: he asks us who we are, he founds his insistent interrogation on ideas and insights which are in part discontinuous with Western culture, and he is impolite. This rupture in both substance and style—he disdained what he called “bon ton” culture—was threatening. Hence Gurdjieff’s historic role in the evolution of twentieth-century culture and his enduring influence have not yet been assessed in the vague, but nonetheless real public forum where such matters are ultimately decided. He may in time be perceived as one of the primary vehicles for the integration of Eastern and Western spirituality in a century when this was one of the principal, although well-hidden, needs. The fruits of the integration he achieved and the relation of his accomplishments to other efforts in the same domain remain to be seen. Mercilessly critical and mocking, like Diogenes of old, he nonetheless arrived at our doorstep with extraordinary gifts.

Gurdjieff was unlike other men. Those who recorded their impressions of his person have left a strikingly consistent composite document. The late [Henri Tracol](#), one of the foremost exponents of the Gurdjieff teaching and a man with a keen sense for the well-chosen word, remembered:

... his massive presence, the serene power, at once formidable and reassuring, which emanated from his whole being—his bearing, his gestures, his manner. I can still hear his voice resounding in me, arousing echoes that are ever fresh and new. Above all, I find myself standing before him, his eyes in mine, confronting the exacting benevolence of his gaze. Exacting, yes, and at times fiery and merciless. He seemed to guess the best as well as the worst in us and, being an expert in such matters, he smiled. That smile was ironic and compassionate, but quite without indulgence. Nothing escaped him. We felt him always ready to act without pity toward the oppressors of our own selves which, without knowing it, we were. This can be truly called: love.⁵

This reflection dates to 1967. It refers unmistakably to the same man about whom Tracol wrote in 1943 a

few memorably descriptive words in answer to his comrade, Luc Dietrich. Dietrich is today remembered in France for his novel of 1944, *L'Apprentissage de la ville*, in which the disconcerting common sense of Gurdjieff can be found secretly dispersed among various characters. Dietrich practiced the original custom of presenting his friends with small notebooks in which he had written one or two carefully phrased questions. He expected, indeed demanded, equally careful answers. "What defines," he asked Tracol via one such notebook, "a proper attitude toward Mr. Gurdjieff? What should a pupil's attitude be?" Tracol responded:

Never forget what one is seeking from him. Never lose sight of the fact that he is the master, but also a man. And keep a tight rein on all subjective reactions toward him. Always be on the *qui vive*. Never let oneself be caught in the traps he sets for one. Know how to open oneself to him without self-abandon. Know how to exact from him the Word.⁶

The range of experience in Gurdjieff's company was, obviously, very great: from vigilance to avoid the traps he laid to a religious dimension evoked by Tracol's reference to "the Word."

Another witness, P. L. Travers, author of the Mary Poppins books, spontaneously used some of the same words to evoke the man she first met in 1938:

He was a serene, massive man who looked at one with a long, contemplative, all-knowing glance. I felt myself in a presence. He had a certain quality that one might call mythological. Later, when I came to be his student, I always felt the same way: He was a man whom you recognized but you didn't know what you were recognizing.... When we were in Gurdjieff's presence, we felt his energy infused in us. He could deliver this to anyone in the room. He had something very high and not within our ordinary comprehension.⁷

"Who was he?" echoed René Zuber in his brief but touching book about Gurdjieff. And he continued:

I feel sure that many of those who approached him, if not all, were tempted to ask him this question; but such was his prestige, such was his power, that they never dared to ask him outright.

Some people were simply curious, others had an inner thirst and had been told that here was a spring at which this thirst could be quenched. The shock of the encounter, however, always exceeded the expectation and some preferred to run away rather than undergo an experience that might well force them to put in question all their accepted ideas.

When I knew him, in 1943, he was no longer young.... He had both the majesty of an old man and the agility of a fencer capable of delivering a lightning thrust; no matter how unpredictable his changes of mood, however surprising his manifestations, his impressive

calm never deserted him.

“He looks like Bodhidharma,” Philippe Lavastine had told me before taking me to see him, “because he has the sternness of an awakener of conscience, and because of his large moustaches.”⁸

Gurdjieff considered the capacity to play consciously the roles imposed by daily life to be a key to inner freedom, and he himself set the example with the fluency of a consummate actor. He almost never revealed himself to his pupils in all simplicity. Nonetheless, certain among them could recall such moments. [Georgette Leblanc](#), author of *My Life with Maurice Maeterlinck*, provides an arresting account:

Great emotion. When I arrived at his apartment, he opened the door himself.... The light coming from the little salon shone on him brightly. Instead of concealing himself, he abruptly stepped back and leaned against the wall. For the first time, he allowed me to see what he really was ... as if he had suddenly stripped away the masks behind which it is his duty to hide. His face was imprinted with a charity that embraced the entire world. Standing rigidly before him, I saw him with all my strength and I experienced a gratitude so deep, so painful, that he felt the need to quiet me. With an unforgettable look, he uttered: “God helps me.”⁹

But it is time to abandon this attempt to ask Gurdjieff to sit for his portrait. We should look, instead, at reports of Gurdjieff in action, working with his pupils, responding to their questions, creating circumstances.

Gurdjieff's Places

A preliminary word about the settings where all of this occurred would be useful, since they changed very much from the early years in Russia to the middle and late years in Paris. Gurdjieff in Russia is the focus of Ouspensky's brilliant book, previously mentioned, and appears vividly, as well, in *Our Life with Mr. Gurdjieff*, joint memoir of the composer [Thomas de Hartmann](#) and his wife, Olga. As Gurdjieff moved with a handful of pupils from revolutionary Russia southward to Black Sea villages, Tiflis (now Tbilisi), and ultimately Constantinople, Ouspensky and the de Hartmanns remain the best observers, although others—C. E. Bechhofer for Georgia, [J. G. Bennett](#) for Turkey—add insight. This entire period of forced emigration from a collapsing center of culture to an uncertain haven was one of improvisation against high odds, of forming and dissolving conditions for the study of his teaching as the civil and political situation permitted. “On the ocean,” he told his pupils at this time, “even during great storms, there are quiet areas where there is no turbulence at all. And so it is during revolutions.”¹⁰ At one point, high in the Caucasus mountains, he must have felt that he and his little band of followers had reached such a zone of relative calm: “Now I am at peace,” he said. “We do not have to deal with men anymore, just wild animals.”¹¹

Gurdjieff moved westward from Constantinople to Berlin in 1920, from which he tried without success to lease the spacious building at Hellerau where Emile Jaques-Dalcroze had established his institute for the study of music and dance, closed soon after the beginning of the Great War. But the brief German period of Gurdjieff's search for a home for his work, perhaps a year in all, has left little apparent trace—a memorably spirited photograph with hat and cane in the sunlight in Dresden, a short and none too friendly chapter on Germany in [Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson](#), few recorded memories from pupils who saw this period through with him.¹²

He moved on with his followers to Paris, briefly explored the possibility of founding a center in England, then definitively settled on Paris and its region as the Western home for his work. In 1922, he obtained a long-term lease on the Château du Prieuré at Fontainebleau-Avon, where he founded the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man. From 1922 through the early 1930s, the Prieuré represented an expansive time and place where one can meet Gurdjieff very fully through the writings of his pupils. And then there were the later years in Paris, when Gurdjieff lived in a modest apartment, received pupils and visitors over sumptuous Middle Eastern meals he himself prepared, and transmitted his teaching with great intensity. Apart from the war years, which he spent in Paris seeing his French pupils virtually without interruption, he made frequent trips to New York, where groups of people had been studying his teaching since 1924.

These were Gurdjieff's places, to which should be added the Café de la Paix, where he had the custom of writing in the privacy of a public place, and of meeting pupils and family members. And then there were pleasant cities across France—Vichy, Cannes, and others—to which he and an entourage of pupils, family members, and occasionally children would caravan by car. These were excursions of Homeric dimension, richly attested by his traveling companions.

At the Prieuré

Concerning the life of the Prieuré and the multiple activities of its director, we might first consult two sharply contrasting sources: the published journals of a sturdy lifelong pupil, the Englishman [C. S. Nott](#), and the quietly jubilant letters of Katherine Mansfield. The [prospectus of the Institute](#), a rare document very much of its period, describes “a training establishment” at which “applied arts and crafts, agriculture, horticulture, market-gardening” and “duliotherapy,” as well as rhythmic dances and other activities and studies, supported an intensive work of self-study and self-development. The term “duliotherapy” at once attracts notice. Our informant in this regard is [A. R. Orage](#), the celebrated English editor and publisher who abandoned a career at the center of London literary life to study with Gurdjieff at the Institute. Nott recorded this fragment of a conversation with Orage:

My first weeks at the Prieuré were weeks of real suffering. I was told to dig, and as I had had no real exercise for years I suffered so much physically that I would go back to my room, a sort of cell, and literally cry with fatigue. No one, not even Gurdjieff, came near me. I asked myself, “Is this what I have given up my whole life for? At least I had something then. Now what have I?” When I was in the very depths of despair, feeling that

I could go on no longer, I vowed to make extra effort, and just then something changed in me. Soon, I began to enjoy the hard labor, and a week later Gurdjieff came to me and said, “Now, Orage, I think you dig enough. Let us go to café and drink coffee.” From that moment things began to change. This was my first initiation. The former things had passed away.¹³

This was duliotherapy: Gurdjieff’s invitation to those who came to him to meet their bodies as such, to break through the emotional and intellectual rigidities they had involuntarily brought with them, by *hard labor*—not forever but for long enough, and not for its own sake. Even toughened workmen like Nott, for whom physical labor was nothing new, discovered the challenges of duliotherapy. “Having already experienced almost every kind of physical toil and discomfort,” he wrote,

as soldier, sailor, farmer, laborer, I considered that the Prieuré had nothing to teach me in this respect. But it did not take more than two or three weeks for me to begin to see that I still had much to learn; to realize that I did not know how to do physical work—as a man and not a machine. I had been told to “chop” stones, and with four girls I spent ten days breaking limestone rock into small pieces the size of a nut. It was a contrast to working in the shady walks of the forest with the men; in the hot sun it became monotonous, dull, and wearisome, and my feelings began to revolt. I worked spasmodically and nervously. Gurdjieff came along one day, with the doctor, Stjoernval. “Why you work so nervously?” he asked. “It’s a result of the war,” I said. “No!” he replied. “I think you always like this. Watch Gertrude, see how she works. All your attention goes in watching the clock, listening for the dinner bell.” The next day Dr. Stjoernval said to me, “You know, Mr. Gurdjieff says we should learn to work like men, not like ordinary laborers. Like men, not like machines. Try to save your energy while you are chopping stones. You waste much energy in resenting what you are doing. Make a list of thirty or forty words in a foreign language and memorize them while you are working; at the same time try to sense your body and notice what you are doing....”

Soon, by making the effort to do this simple exercise, a change in my attitude to the monotonous labor began to take place. Some of the energy that I had been wasting in resentment was used productively for myself. The work even became satisfying. Some days later Gurdjieff again passed and glanced at me. The next day I was given another job.¹⁴

The story is simple, the result simple: a point of departure for “work on oneself,” not its culmination. “When you know how to do one thing well,” Gurdjieff told his pupils, “you can do everything”—and he started with simple challenges.

Katherine Mansfield’s letters reveal another point of view on the same phenomena and take us, as well, into the zone of women’s work at the Prieuré. Friend and literary protégé of Orage, Mansfield was admitted to the Institute in October 1922, at a very early stage of its existence. She was suffering from

severe tuberculosis, and Gurdjieff must have known that her time was limited—she died at the Prieuré in early January of the following year—but she joined the life as much as she could, as much as Gurdjieff would permit her. Her letters to her husband from those months are small classics of observation and sensibility; they are her last, unforgettable short story. “I decided to ask Mr. Gurdjieff if he would let me stay for a time,” she wrote:

“Here” is a very beautiful old château in glorious grounds. It was a Carmelite monastery, then one of Madame de Maintenon’s “seats.” Now, it is modernized inside—I mean, chauffage centrale, electric light, and so on. But it’s a most wonderful old place in an amazingly lovely park. About 40 people—chiefly Russians—are here working, at every possible kind of thing. I mean, outdoor work, looking after animals, gardening, indoor work, music, dancing—it seems a bit of everything. Here the philosophy of the “system” takes second place. Practice is first. You simply have to wake up instead of talking about it, in fact. You have to learn to do all the things you say you want to do.¹⁵

Some days later she continued her chronicle from a more experienced perspective. No longer considering herself an outsider looking in, she had recognized some “we” to which she sensed she belonged:

I spend all the sunny time in the garden. Visit the carpenters, the trench diggers. (We are digging for a Turkish Bath—not to discover one, but to lay the pipes.) The soil is very nice here, like sand, with small whitey pink pebbles in it. Then there are the sheep to inspect and the new pigs that have long golden hair—very mystical pigs. A mass of cosmic rabbits and hens—and goats are on the way, likewise horses and mules to ride and drive. The Institute is not really started yet for another fortnight. A dancing hall is being built and the house is still being organized. But it has started really. If all this were to end in smoke tomorrow I should have had the very great wonderful adventure of my life. I’ve learnt more in a week than in years là-bas. As to habits. My wretched sense of order, for instance, which rode me like a witch. It did not take long to cure that.

Mr. Gurdjieff likes me to go into the kitchen in the late afternoon and “watch.” I have a chair in the corner. It’s a large kitchen with 6 helpers. Madame Ostrovsky, the head [Gurdjieff’s wife], walks about like a queen exactly. She wears an old raincoat. Nina, a big girl in a black apron—lovely, too—pounds things in mortars. The second cook chops at the table, bangs the saucepans, sings; another runs in and out with plates and pots, a man in the scullery cleans pots—the dog barks and lies on the floor, worrying a hearthbrush. A little girl comes in with a bouquet of leaves for Olga Ivanovna. Mr. Gurdjieff strides in, takes up a handful of shredded cabbage and eats it ... there are at least 20 pots on the stove. And it’s so full of life and humor and ease that one wouldn’t want to be anywhere else. It’s just the same all through—ease after *rigidity* expresses it more than anything I know.¹⁶

Meanwhile, in the forest and gardens, the men and able-bodied women—and some children—were continuing their efforts. J. G. Bennett, an Englishman who met Gurdjieff in Turkey, studied briefly at the

Prieuré, and resumed his connection with Gurdjieff after World War II, tells a story that has achieved legendary status among people who prize “tales of Gurdjieff,” these contemporary teaching stories. He remembers:

I went to the stone quarry, where the mercilessly hard limestone of Fontainebleau Forest was being quarried to build the Russian bath. A burly young man named Tcheckhov Tchekhovitch was in charge of this work. The second day I was on this task a very large block of limestone broke away. Tchekhovitch said it was just what Gurdjieff wanted to make the lintel of the Russian bath. It was far too heavy for us to remove, and we tried to break it up with stone chisels and crowbars. After two hours, during which we had made no impression on the stone, Gurdjieff suddenly appeared in his town clothes. I learned later that he had just come from Paris, having been up all night. He did not say a word, but stood on the edge of the pit and watched us. We went on hacking away at the stone. Abruptly, he took off his coat and jumping into the pit, took a hammer and chisel from one of the Russian workers. He looked closely at the rock, placed the chisel carefully and tapped three or four times. He walked half round it, and after a careful examination tapped again. I am sure he had not struck the rock more than a dozen times when a huge flake, weighing perhaps a hundred pounds, cracked off and fell away. He repeated the operation three or four times and behold, a slab remained less than half the size of the original. He said: “Lift.” We put out all our strength and the rock came up, and we carried it over to the bath.

It was a telling exhibition of skill that has remained in my memory as vividly as when I saw it. But this is only half the story. More than 25 years later I was sitting beside Gurdjieff at a meal in his flat in Paris, and Tchekhovitch, now grey and almost bald, was standing facing us. Gurdjieff was talking about Ju-jitsu, and saying that he had learned a far more advanced art in Central Asia than that of the Japanese. It was called Fiz-lez-Lou, and he had thought of introducing it in Europe and was looking for someone to train as an instructor. As Tchekhovitch had been in his youth a champion wrestler, he had been the natural candidate. He then spoke to Tchekhovitch, and said: “Do you remember at the Prieuré when we were making the Russian bath, how you tried to break the rock for the door frame and could not? I watched you then, and saw that you did not know how to look. I could see just where the rock would crack, but you could not see even when I showed you. So I gave up the idea of teaching Fiz-lez-Lou in Europe.”

Tchekhovitch, who adored Gurdjieff as if he were a divine incarnation, stood motionless and said: “Yes Georgy Ivanitch; I remember.” Then tears began to roll down his cheek.¹⁷

Katherine Mansfield’s experience continued to be much different; she was there to rest, to learn, with God’s help to recover. Gurdjieff advised her to spend a great deal of time in the cowshed, where the rich odor of the livestock could soothe her lungs. To further this unusual therapy, he had a gallery built there, and it was decorated by his friend and pupil, [Alexandre de Salzmann](#), a well-known stage designer from

the Dalcroze Institute whose portrait as Père Sogol was obliquely drawn by [René Daumal](#) years later in his unfinished novel, *Mount Analogue* (1952).¹⁸ Katherine Mansfield wrote:

There is a small steep staircase to a little railed-off gallery above the cows. On the little gallery are divans covered with Persian carpets.... The whitewashed walls and ceiling have been decorated most exquisitely in what looks like a Persian pattern of yellow, red, and blue by Mr. Salzmänn. Flowers, little birds, butterflies and a spreading tree with animals on the branches, even a hippopotamus ... —a little masterpiece. And all so gay, so simple.... There I go every day.... On Sunday afternoon when I was in the stable [Mr. Gurdjieff] came up to rest, too, and talked to me a little. First about cows and then about the monkey he has bought which is to be trained to clean the cows. Then he suddenly asked me how I was and said I looked better. “Now,” he said, “you have two doctors you must obey. Doctor Stable and Doctor New Milk. Not to think, not to write.... Rest. Rest. Live in your body again.”¹⁹

Strangely, Katherine did not record that the faces of the animals in de Salzmänn’s decorative scheme bore a more than accidental resemblance to various pupils of the Institute.

Just as Gurdjieff was there for Katherine Mansfield—it seems doubtful that he climbed into her gallery just to rest, and his project of training a monkey as a stable boy seems cunningly designed to entertain his famous guest—so Gurdjieff was there at the right moment for many other pupils of the Institute. Stories abound, none more remarkable than an experience of Fritz Peters at the time he was discharging the solemn duty of serving as Gurdjieff’s personal aide. Fritz was a boy of eleven or twelve at the time:

[Mr. Gurdjieff] had a distinguished visitor that day—A. R. Orage—a man who was well-known to all of us, and accepted as an accredited teacher of Gurdjieffian theory. After luncheon that day, the two of them retired to Gurdjieff’s room, and I was summoned to deliver the usual coffee. Orage’s stature was such that we all treated him with great respect. There was no doubt of his intelligence, his dedication, his integrity. In addition, he was a warm, compassionate man for whom I had great personal affection.

When I reached the doorway of Gurdjieff’s room with my tray of coffee and brandy, I hesitated, appalled at the violent sounds of furious screaming—Gurdjieff’s voice—from within. I knocked and, receiving no reply, entered. Gurdjieff was standing by his bed in a state of what seemed to me to be completely uncontrolled fury. He was raging at Orage, who stood impassively, and very pale, framed in one of the windows. I had to walk between them to set the tray on the table. I did so, feeling flayed by the fury of Gurdjieff’s voice, and then retreated, attempting to make myself invisible. When I reached the door, I could not resist looking at both of them: Orage, a tall man, seemed withered and crumpled as he sagged in the window, and Gurdjieff, actually not very tall, looked immense—a complete embodiment of rage. Although the raging was in English I was unable to listen to the words—the flow of anger was too enormous. Suddenly, in the space of an instant,

Gurdjieff's voice stopped, his whole personality changed, he gave me a broad smile—looking incredibly peaceful and inwardly quiet—motioned me to leave, and then resumed his tirade with undiminished force. This happened so quickly that I do not believe Mr. Orage even noticed the break in the rhythm.

When I had first heard the sound of Mr. Gurdjieff's voice from outside the room I had been horrified.... Now, leaving the room, my feelings were completely reversed. I was still appalled by the fury I had seen in Gurdjieff; terrified by it. In a sense, I was even more terrified when I left the room because I realized that it was not only *not* "uncontrollable" but actually under great control and completely conscious on his part. I still felt sorry for Mr. Orage.²⁰

Sacred Dances and a Musical Collaboration

The field workers, the farmers, the kitchen workers, the older children, even frail Katherine, set aside their diurnal roles in the evening, when they joined together to study Sacred Dances and Movements, some of which Gurdjieff had learned in temples and religious brotherhoods and at village festivals across the Near East and central Asia, many others of which were his own compositions. These sessions occurred at first in one of the Prieuré salons, but soon in a much better adapted structure known to all of our informants by its English name, the Study House. Those who search for this building on the Prieuré grounds today will not find it—it has long since disappeared—but descriptions of this rich expression of Gurdjieff's sense of beauty and place exist in the secondary literature. C. S. Nott first saw it in 1924:

The Study House had been built ... from a disused hangar ... in the form of a Dervish tekke. Walls and floor were of earth. Inside, over the entrance, was a small gallery with a seat, and hung round the gallery was a collection of stringed instruments and drums from the Near and Far East; while on the walls were several diplomas or certificates in Eastern characters, which had at various times been given to Gurdjieff. The floor of the Study House was covered with carpets from Persia, Afghanistan, and other Eastern countries, and carpets hung on the walls. Inside on the right of the entrance was a box with hangings, Gurdjieff's own seat. Round the walls of the House were raised seats for spectators, separated from the open space by a painted wooden fence. At the far end was a raised platform of earth, covered with linoleum, for Movements; and in front a small fountain. The windows were stained and painted in a pleasing harmony of colors; while scattered about on the walls, in a script somewhat like Persian or Turkish, were aphorisms or sayings. The atmosphere was that of a holy place.²¹

Gurdjieff was the least sentimental of men, but he was not immune to a deep nostalgia, as we have already noticed in his account of Persian clay lamps. In 1932, shortly before he left the Prieuré, he drove there from Paris with Kathryn Hulme and her companion Wendy, and ushered them into the Study House, still fully furnished but no longer in use. Kathryn Hulme wrote:

I remembered, like a yesterday's experience, how Wendy had clapped her hands and cried, "Oh how beautiful, Mr. Gurdjieff!" when he had led us into the Persian-carpeted enclosure—a large hall out of *The Thousand and One Nights* with painted windows, divans and fountain before a stage at the far end ... and how he had looked at her in the colored gloom with a peculiar expression and had said, "You *feel*?"

Despite the stagy furnishing there had been a holy feeling about it which came over us after the first moments.²²

It was here that Gurdjieff and his pupils prepared the demonstration of Sacred Dances given at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées at the end of 1923, and the comparable programs offered in New York, Boston, and elsewhere in the winter of 1924. There are many testimonies to the character and force of Gurdjieff's Sacred Dances or Movements, none more direct than the sequence of Movements, directed by [Jeanne de Salzmann](#), which appears at the end of the Peter Brook film, *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, released in 1978. Katherine Mansfield's testimony, dating to autumn 1922, is brief but, as always, original and felt. "Every evening," she wrote,

about fifty people meet in the salon and there is music and they are working at present at a tremendous ancient Assyrian group Dance. I have no words with which to describe it... I must say the dancing here has given me quite a different approach to writing. I mean some of the very ancient Oriental dances. There is one which takes about 7 minutes and it contains the whole life of woman—but everything! Nothing is left out. It taught me, it gave me more of woman's life than any book or poem. There was even room for Flaubert's *Coeur simple* in it, and for Princess Marya.... Mysterious.²³

Throughout Gurdjieff's years in the West, and in the fifty years since his death, the Movements have retained a central place among the disciplines offered those who approach his teaching. His very last years, when he composed an extensive new series of Movements, were as fertile as the much earlier years in Essentuki and Tiflis, where he put much emphasis on this aspect. An anecdote from post-war Paris evokes his joy, even as an old man, in this form of work on oneself. The speaker is [Annie-Lou Staveley](#), a British pupil who taught in the United States until her death in 1997:

I remember a hot summer day. The Movements class, in which I had not participated, had been particularly strenuous. Afterwards we gathered at the apartment. Two of the American girls called "the calves" were late and Mr. Gurdjieff was displeased. Thunder was written on his brow. Everyone quailed. "Where is ... ?" he asked. Another calf anxiously explained that they had raced to their hotel to take a shower after the Movements class. They were very hot. The clouds dispersed. "Ah!" he said in a tone of immense satisfaction, smiling. "Sweat!" He stretched the word out to its uttermost limits.²⁴

Music was an integral part of the life around Gurdjieff. If the Prieuré in the 1920s was in many respects his court—the place where he ruled unquestioned yet generously—then Thomas de Hartmann was his

Kapellmeister in those privileged years. De Hartmann was an exquisitely trained composer, a pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov, who studied conducting in Munich, where he joined the avant-garde circle of the painter Wassily Kandinsky before World War I. Returning to Russia when war broke out, he and his wife met Gurdjieff in St. Petersburg, followed him out of the revolutionary zone—often under very trying conditions—and remained with him until 1929.

[The musical collaboration between Gurdjieff and de Hartmann](#), focused in the mid-1920s, produced a body of music for Movements and for concert performance that has only recently been released, in part, for general distribution.²⁵ This music—various, often immensely impressive—has been [engagingly discussed by the composer Laurence Rosenthal](#).²⁶ C. S. Nott witnessed the collaboration between Gurdjieff and de Hartmann during rehearsals in the Study House:

The music was played by Hartmann on an ancient upright piano, which under his touch produced magic music. When Gurdjieff wanted a new piece he would pick it out on the piano with one finger, supplementing the notes by whistling. Then Hartmann would begin the melody and by degrees fill in the harmony, Gurdjieff standing over him until it was as he wished. He would give Hartmann no respite until he got it as it should be. Only a first-rate musician like Hartmann could have produced such music, and he, on at least one occasion, found the situation so impossible when Gurdjieff was going for him that he got up from the piano and left the Study House.²⁷

De Hartmann himself was both witness and participant, for example in the following passage from his book, which refers to rehearsals in Constantinople but evokes the collaboration as it continued to unfold at the Prieuré. A new Movement is being developed by Gurdjieff working with his pupils, while de Hartmann is at the piano:

He gave me the tempo of the exercise and a melody he himself had written on paper, from which I was expected to improvise the music on the spot. But then he gave me also a separately written upper voice, which was meant to sound as if played on sonorous little bells. It was now impossible to play everything with two hands, so he told Madame de Salzmann to play the lower part and me the upper part. I struggled feverishly to get it all down on paper and we began to play....

The main melody was now in my left hand with the added voice above it. He told Madame de Salzmann to double the main melody one sixth lower with her right hand, and play the rhythm with her left. It was amazing how the accompaniment, the little high voice, and the two main voices a sixth apart, blended together like parts of a single machine.

Soon after that Mr. Gurdjieff brought me another piece of paper, with an unusual combination of flats in the key signature.²⁸

In his later years Gurdjieff had the custom of playing an old-fashioned harmonium, a small keyboard instrument with a hand-operated bellows. One of his listeners at 6 rue des Colonels Renards in the post-war years was Dorothy Caruso, widow of the great operatic tenor. “No matter how late,” she recalled,

each night in the salon after dinner Gurdjieff took his little accordion-piano on his knee and, while his left hand worked the bellows, his right hand made music in minor chords and haunting single notes.

But one night in his aromatic store-room he played for five of us, alone, a different kind of music, although whether the difference lay in its sorrowful harmonies or in the way he played I do not know. I only know that no music had ever been so sad. Before it ended I put my head on the table and wept.

“What has happened to me?” I said. “When I came into this room I was happy. And then that music—and now I am happy again.”

“I play objective music to make cry,” Gurdjieff said. “There are many kinds such music—some to make laugh, or to love or to hate. This the beginning of music—sacred music, two, three thousand years old. Your church music comes from such but they don’t realize. They have forgotten. This is temple music—very ancient.”

Once when he played I thought the music sounded like a prayer—it seemed to supplicate. And then I thought, “It is only my imagination and emotion,” and I tried not to feel what I was feeling. But when he had finished, instead of smiling and tapping the top of the instrument with his hand, he sat quite still and his eyes stood motionless, as if he were looking at us through his thoughts. Then he said, “It’s a prayer,” and left us.²⁹

Among Children

There was a children’s subculture at the Prieuré, linked to the dominant adult culture but with rites and perspectives of its own. Fritz Peters is our best guide to this subculture, although many others witnessed Gurdjieff’s gestures toward children as the years passed and recorded their impressions. Peters wrote of his young life at the Prieuré:

One of the pleasures and challenges of “concierge duty” was a competition among all the children—this duty was almost exclusively the work of the children—to be sufficiently alert on this job to have the gates, through which the automobiles had to pass, opened in time for Mr. Gurdjieff to drive through them without having to stop his car and blow the horn as a signal to the gatekeeper.

One difficulty with this was that the entrance to the Prieuré was at the foot of a long hill which descended from the railway station; the streetcar to Samoï also passed directly in

front of the gate where the highway made a wide turn in the direction of Samois, away from the Prieuré. Frequently the noise of the tramway obscured the sound of cars coming down the hill, and interfered with our game. Also, once Mr. Gurdjieff became aware of the competition, he would usually coast down the hill so that we would not be aided by the sound of the motor.

It was mostly thanks to Philos, the dog, who often followed me around during Mr. Gurdjieff's absences, that I was usually able to get the gates opened in time for him to sail through them, a big smile on his face. By watching Philos, whose ears would prick up at the sound of any passing car, but who would jump to his feet at the sound of Mr. Gurdjieff's car, I was almost always successful.

Amused by this game of ours, Mr. Gurdjieff once asked me how it was that I was able to, practically unfailingly, have the gates open in time, and I told him about Philos. He laughed and then said that this was a very good example of cooperation. "Show that man have much to learn, and can learn from many unexpected places. Even dog can help. Man very weak, need help all time."³⁰

With children, Gurdjieff had the art of compressing lessons into short, original scenarios that attracted their minds and set them working and questioning. Late in his life, for example, during an excursion with his pupils, the company was about to rise from dinner and pass to another room for coffee. "Before he went," writes Elizabeth Bennett, one of the most fearless and affectionate witnesses to Gurdjieff's ways,

he held up his half-eaten segment of melon and said who could clean this so that it could be painted—tomorrow he wished to paint this skin and give it as a present to a friend—who would prepare it for him? Paul said he would, and Mr. G. said Eve could help him and if they did it properly he could have 1,000 francs. When we left the dining room Eve and Paul were sitting at the table still, with their heads together over the melon skin.

[After a time] Paul came back with his melon skin and showed it to Mr. G. They bent over it together, very solemn, and then G. said no, it wasn't quite good enough; nothing yellow should remain. Paul went solemnly off to fetch a razor blade and Mr. G., watching him go, laughed and said, "See now what education he have." Until now he knew nothing, he only knew how to eat and shit, "never he work with this," tapping his forehead, "now this his first *labour*." When Paul came back again after an interval, the skin was perfect: Mr. G. folded it and put it in his pocket and gave the 1,000 francs—"not forget sister."³¹

Money was the focus of another ingenious scenario in these late years, which occurred at the Wellington Hotel, in New York, where Gurdjieff spent part of the winter of 1948. The speaker is Dr. William Welch, the American physician who attended Gurdjieff in his final illness, a man of deep skepticism matched by warmth:

[Gurdjieff] used to say that the only people who interested him were children under five and grownups over fifty-five. Before five, people were not yet wholly spoiled, and after fifty-five, their egotism was less active. As the latter were eligible in his salon for hot coffee and treatment as honored guests, it was sometimes difficult for the oldsters, more especially the more sensitive women, to decide whether to count themselves in or out of the charmed circle.

I remember one test he put to all the children at his feet, and there were often twenty or thirty in the throng jammed into the drawing room at the Wellington. He offered them their choice of one crisp ten-dollar bill from a batch in a bread basket, or eight coins from another basket piled high with old-fashioned silver dollars.

The exquisite inner calculations among the shrewder children was intense. My own daughter, who chose the silver dollars ... did so, she said quite simply, because she knew she could never bring herself to spend them, as she might a bill, and she would thus have a permanent memento of the strange man her parents were so attached to, and with whom she felt a curious rapport and warmth, mixed with notions of mystery and magic.³²

In the 1930s and '40s, Gurdjieff was known in the *quartiers* he frequented as “Monsieur Bonbon.” This too reflects his relations with children—and with some adults. Kathryn Hulme remembered an occasion when she and her friends joined him at a café:

We sat with him until his waiter brought his bill. To a generous tip he added, from his pocket, a handful of small wrapped candies which the gray-headed waiter gathered up with a pleased expression.

“Like a small boy,” Gurdjieff said as the waiter went off. “Always I take bonbons in my pocket, chiefly for children. They call me Monsieur Bonbon. Even here in café by such name I am known. So I *must* give, always. They *expect* ...” A sound of deep inner mirth escaped him as he repeated the name by which the innocents identified him. “Monsieur Bonbon!”³³

With some of his pupils in Paris during the Occupation, he returned to this theme with a good deal more emphasis:

“You know, I always have candy in my pocket and when I see a child, I give it some. With the child there is always someone, its father, its mother, or an aunt. Without fail they always say the same thing to the child: ‘What do you say?’ And little by little the child begins to say thank you automatically to everyone and no longer feels anything. This is not just idiotic, it is a crime!

“When a child wishes to say thank you, I understand him. I understand his language. And

it's this language I love. For no other reason than to hear it, for no other reason than to see this truthful impulse, I distribute five kilos of candy every day—for which I pay 410 francs the kilo.”³⁴

But all, of course, was not “bonbons” in Gurdjieff’s relations with children: he was warm, but he was challenging. Once he turned to the father of his close pupil, Olga de Hartmann, who had been raised with every advantage of wealth and position:

“You see, father, what you make me do? You never shouted at your daughter, so she has not had this experience, and all sorts of impressions are necessary for people. So now I am obliged to do it in your place.”³⁵

Exercises

“One thing you must know, Krokodeel,” Gurdjieff said to Kathryn Hulme (whom he addressed in lavishly accented English as “Crocodile”):

“Nervousness has a momentum. The mind cannot stop nervousness, it must go on until the momentum finishes. It is important that you remember this....”

“You must know,” he continued, “a most important thing about Man. Man cannot stay long in one subjective state. The subjective state depends from a thousand things. You can *never* know the subjective state of another. It is typicality of man that no two such states are ever the same; they are like thumbprints, each different. When you see her,” he indicated Wendy at another table, “in some subjective state, you must not try to understand what causes it. Even she cannot know. If, for example, she is angry with you, you say—*She* is not mad with me, her state is mad with me. *Never reply with your interior. Never* have revenge associations.”³⁶

This is the classic moment with Gurdjieff, the moment when he provides an insight and converts it into a challenging exercise for daily life or for times of private meditation. Exercises were the coin of his realm: he had innumerable exercises to offer, some certainly ancient and rooted in traditions he had encountered, others improvised to meet a specific present circumstance. The pupil was to accept them, to work with them, and to report the results. These reports were the coin of the pupils’ realm. Depending on the substance of the reports and the attitude—even quite secret and camouflaged—with which they were offered, Gurdjieff was able to redirect the pupil’s efforts, confirm discoveries, provide a further exercise, or when necessary shock the pupil into new recognitions.

Through the later 1930s, the years of the Occupation, and the post-war period, when English and American pupils were able to return, Gurdjieff’s table was the scene of exchange between master and pupil. René Zuber captured the atmosphere in recalling his first serious encounter with Gurdjieff:

His table, at the end of a meal, when a great silence fell to make way for the questions of his pupils, resembled the mat in a judo club. The master, his head shaven like that of a samurai, waited calmly without moving. The “Monsieur, may I ask you a question?” that broke the silence was something of a ritual, comparable with the salutation of two *judokas* bowing deeply to each other. At that moment the respect that filled the room reached its peak.

I knew what it was to be beyond good and evil, beyond fear, the first time I asked Mr. Gurdjieff a question. I said to him: “Monsieur, in order to search for truth one has to run the risk of making mistakes. Now, I am afraid of making mistakes, so I remain sitting at my window and I see no reason why it should ever end....”

I had put this question into words because Philippe, who was sitting on my left, had nudged me and whispered: “Go on! Now’s your chance!”, because Mr. Gurdjieff had granted me an “oï, oï,” of approval; because all eyes were turned towards me, and I found myself suddenly confronted by infinite space, just as I imagine an astronaut, in a state of weightlessness, would if he opened the door of his capsule. In the split second of silence that followed I felt all the familiar currents of life flowing into me again with such force that I would not even have heard Mr. Gurdjieff’s answer had it been other than it was.

This answer rolled over me, into me, like an avalanche. I heard a voice as though through a fog, coming from the mountain, affirming that yes, it was indeed so, I was not good for much—a good-for-nothing, “a piece of live meat,” “a shit.” “In my own country,” Gurdjieff went on, “you even pay people to get rid of it.” I could not be relied upon. I might have a checkbook in my pocket, but my signature was worthless. However, if I wished, it could all change. Later on, perhaps at the end of the war, my signature would be worth something.

To my insidious question: “Monsieur, who are you, then? Are you a true master or a false one? I never board a ship without being perfectly sure of the length of the journey and the identity of the captain”—to this question he gave me no answer.

He had thrown me back onto myself. “And *you*, who are *you*, then?”—with such force that I shall never forget it.

It was a master stroke.³⁷

“If I wished, it could all change.” By what means, Mr. Gurdjieff? By work on oneself. But what is that, Mr. Gurdjieff? The answer to this question moves our inquiry into an increasingly private realm, as Dr. Walker makes clear:

Beneath the daily routine of Rue des Colonels Régnards there ran an unobtrusive current of

purpose, a current which would every now and then break through to the surface and reveal itself. This was particularly likely to happen when two or three of us were invited to take coffee with Mr. Gurdjieff in his own private room. This sanctum was situated in the heart of his flat and it was actually the store-room. The walls of this room were traversed by tiers and tiers of wooden shelves all over-laden with every conceivable form of grocery: innumerable tins, packets of sweets, boxes of confectionery, bags of flour, oatmeal, currants, raisins and sugar, bottles of brandy and vodka.... At a small table, pressed up against a rampart of shelves mounting up to the ceiling, sits Gurdjieff.... Madame de Salzman is seated at his side ready to interpret for us difficult passages in his mixture of French, English, and Russian, whilst the rest of us sit around him on small canvas-topped stools or upturned grocery boxes....

The conversation was always of a very private nature. "This that I tell you," he would say, "is for you alone and it must not be discussed with other people. I ask you to do this and then later, when you come next time to Paris, you can report to me what you find." He would then outline some psychological or physiological exercise and would give us very precise instructions how this exercise was to be carried out. While imparting these instructions he would speak with the exactitude of an old and experienced physician prescribing treatment to his patients, choosing his words very carefully and talking in grave and convincing tones. At such times his words fell on our ears with immense weight for they seemed to be backed, not only by his own wisdom, but by the authority of a long line of unseen and unknown teachers.... For me, at any rate, Gurdjieff represented the last and the only visible link in an immensely long chain of teachers stretching back into a distant and misty past. How strange that the message should have reached me in such surroundings, amid bags of sugar and bottles of spices, packets of raisins and canned meats. But ... it is well known that wisdom is to be found more often in the world's by-ways than in its lecture halls.³⁸

Kathryn Hulme displays no less reticence than the doctor when she approaches the central question of receiving exercises from Gurdjieff. "It is not ... within my competence," she writes,

to describe the Gurdjieff exercises for beginners. I believe that anyone who has struggled to shut off the mechanically racing mind through a sleepless night, or who has tried to pray for even half a minute without having associations drag one's attention away, has had a taste, however small, of the kind of self-discipline into which he initiated us. It was a basic "spiritual exercise" aimed to help us build inner energy.

His final admonitions had touched me deeply.... "Be simple like a monk," he had said, "a monk given a task. You do this exercise with *faith*, not with *knowing* ..." he had touched his forehead, "but with *sure-ing* ..." his expressive hand had dropped to his solar plexus. "*Not knowing* ... but *sure-ing*. Not with the mind but with the feeling."³⁹

But while certain instructions remained secret, much of what he offered at his table or in the quiet of the provisions room had the character of inspired common sense—that is, an open secret. “Often we wondered,” writes Kathryn Hulme,

why he insisted on truths we believed we had heard before, or on ways of conduct we thought we had always followed ... until we pondered his advice and realized we had done the exact opposite all our lives.

“When you do a thing,” he said once, “do it with the whole self. *One thing at a time*. Now I sit here and I eat. For me nothing exists in the world except this food, this table. I eat with the whole attention. So *you* must do—in everything. When you write a letter, do not at the same time think what will be the cost of laundering that shirt; when you compute laundering cost, do not think about the letter you must write. Everything has its time. To be able to do *one* thing at a time ... this is a property of Man, not man in quotation marks.”⁴⁰

Gurdjieff had—and retains to this day—a reputation for assaulting his pupils, for delivering massive psychological shocks in order to free them from their illusions and automatisms. But very much depended on *who* was the pupil. As René Zuber recounts his first exchange with Gurdjieff, we witness a confident young man more than able to withstand the shock of Gurdjieff’s assault, and ultimately grateful for this rude beginning. As Dorothy Caruso recounts her private exchanges with Gurdjieff, we see quite another quality: gentleness in front of the human person:

Once he had spoken to me about my great aim. “I haven’t any aim,” I said; “what should my aim be?” He said, “Do you want to perish like a dog?” I answered, “Of course not.” He didn’t explain, he simply repeated what he had said before: “Remember your ‘I.’” ...

I sat beside him on a bench.... At last I said, “May I tell you something, Mr. Gurdjieff? I wish I had met you twenty years ago. Today it’s too late. I realize now that I am nothing, and it’s the loneliest feeling in the world.”

He turned and looked at me. “Ah,” he said, “you are no longer blind. Your eyes now open—you begin to see.”⁴¹

For Mme Caruso, this acknowledgment was not the end of her relationship with Gurdjieff but more like the true beginning. She had an exercise from Gurdjieff, and he reminded her of it. The lonely feelings that she discovered were only a temporary passage in the larger voyage she had undertaken. For Gurdjieff, exercises were the realm of repetition. “Repeat, repeat, repeat,” he himself repeated:

“Not *once* will you do them,” he said, “not one hundred times will you do them ... but *one thousand and one times* you will do, and *then* perhaps something will happen. Now it is imagination, but sooner or later it will be *fact*, because your animal is *law-able*.”⁴²

“There He Was Before Us ...”

Henri Tracol remembers:

There he was before us, and beneath his gaze each of us tried to awaken. What did he expect of us? No doubt, that there sound within us something like an echo of what he himself sought. There he was before us, a living example of the seeker each person is destined to be. Through his presence, through his insistence—sometimes silent, sometimes accompanied with words—he attempted to evoke in us what he himself experienced as a necessity, as an inner urgency.⁴³

Toward what, finally, did this hurricane of a man lead his pupils? He explained to a gathering in the early days in Russia that a man cannot explore just one world at a time; he must explore both a higher and a lower world simultaneously. Somewhat obscure at this distance, the concept nonetheless evokes the dual focus that is at the heart of Gurdjieff’s teaching: a search to discover the deep resources of unshakeable intelligence and conscience within the individual, and a search to bring those discoveries to bear in daily life in ways that are vivifying, surprising, and sustained. If you work for your life, he taught, you also work for your death; last things take care of themselves when we take care of first things. He taught a new mode of entry into life, not a way of sheltering. This is evident in his advice to Kathryn Hulme as she contemplated a three-month trip to her native America:

“You are out of one chair and have not yet the data for sitting in another chair. All that you will do in America will seem like a pouring from the empty into the void ... all meetings with people and so forth. Later, when you *have* the data, you will go back and do the same thing and *then* it will mean something.”⁴⁴

Notes

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 42. Hulme, op. cit., p. 107.
 43. Tracol, op. cit., p. 95 (retranslated from the original).
 44. Hulme, op. cit., p. 107.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

G. I. Gurdjieff and His School

by Jacob Needleman

Although there is an increasing recognition of the importance of G. I. Gurdjieff in the spiritual landscape of the twentieth century, his name continues to evoke a variety of reactions throughout the world, ranging from awe and reverence to suspicion and hostility. It will no doubt be some time before a general cultural consensus appears, and in this brief account we shall attempt only to survey those aspects of his life and teaching that are of signal importance for anyone approaching this influential spiritual teacher for the first time.

The Early Years

Of Gurdjieff's early life we know only what he has revealed in the autobiographical portions of his own writings, mainly [Meetings with Remarkable Men](#). Although there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of his account, the fact remains that the principal aim of Gurdjieff's writings was not to provide historical information but to serve as a call to awakening and as a continuing source of guidance for the inner search that is the *raison d'être* of his teaching. Pending further discussion of the nature of this search, we can say only that his writings are cast in forms that are directed not only to the intellectual function but also to the emotional and even subconscious sensitivities that, all together, make up the whole of the human psyche. His writings therefore demand and support the search for a finer quality of self-attention on the part of the reader, failing which the thought contained in them is unverifiable at its deeper levels.

Gurdjieff was born probably in 1866 of a Greek father and an Armenian mother in Alexandropol (now Gumri), Armenia, a region where Eastern and Western cultures mixed and often clashed. The environment of his childhood and early adolescence, while suggesting a near-biblical patriarchal culture, is also marked by elements not usually associated with these cultural traditions. The portrait Gurdjieff draws of his father, a well-known *ashokh*, or bard, suggests some form of participation in an oral tradition stretching back to mankind's distant past. At the same time, Gurdjieff speaks of having been exposed to all the forms of modern knowledge, especially experimental science, which he explored with an impassioned diligence. The influence of his father and certain of his early teachers contrasts very sharply with the forces of modernity that he experienced as a child. This contrast, however, is not easily describable. The difference is not simply that of ancient versus modern worldviews or patterns of

behavior, though it certainly includes that. The impression, rather, is that these “remarkable men” of his early years manifested a certain quality of personal presence or *being*. That the vital difference between human beings is a matter of their level of being became one of the fundamental elements in Gurdjieff’s teaching and is not reducible to conventional psychological, behavioral, or cultural typologies.

Meetings with Remarkable Men shows us the youthful Gurdjieff journeying to monasteries and schools of awakening in remote parts of Central Asia and the Middle East, searching for knowledge about man that neither traditional religion nor modern science by itself could offer him. The clues to what Gurdjieff actually found on these journeys are subtly distributed throughout the narrative, rather than laid out in doctrinal form. Discursive statements of ideas are relatively rare in the book, and where they are given it is with a deceptive simplicity that serves to turn the reader back to the teachings woven in the narrative portions of the text. Repeated readings of *Meetings with Remarkable Men* yield the realization that Gurdjieff meant to draw our attention to the search itself and that what he intended to bring to the West was not only a new statement of what has been called “the primordial tradition,” but the knowledge of *how* modern man might conduct his own search within the conditions of twentieth-century life. For Gurdjieff, as we shall see, the search itself, when rightly conducted, emerges as the principal spiritualizing force in human life, what one observer has termed “a transforming search,” rather than “a search for transformation.”¹

Gurdjieff began his work as a teacher in Russia around 1912, on the eve of the civil war that led to the Russian Revolution. In 1914 he was joined by the philosopher [P. D. Ouspensky](#) and soon after by the well-known Russian composer [Thomas de Hartmann](#). Ouspensky was later to produce *[In Search of the Miraculous](#)*, by far the best account of Gurdjieff’s teaching written by a pupil or anyone other than Gurdjieff, while de Hartmann, working in a unique collaboration with Gurdjieff, would produce what has come to be called the “Gurdjieff / de Hartmann music,” the qualities of which will be discussed below. Soon after, as the Revolution drew near and the coming breakdown of civil order began to announce itself, Gurdjieff and a small band of dedicated pupils, including Thomas and [Olga de Hartmann](#), made perilous journeys to the Crimea and Tiflis. There they were joined by [Alexandre](#) and [Jeanne de Salzmann](#), the former a well-known artist and theatrical designer and the latter a teacher of the Dalcroze system of rhythmic dance who was later to emerge as the principal guide under whom his teaching continued to be passed on after his death in 1949. It was in Tiflis, in 1919, that Gurdjieff created the first version of this Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man.

The account by Ouspensky and notes by other pupils published in 1973 under the title *[Views from the Real World](#)* show that in the Moscow period, before the journey out of Russia, Gurdjieff tirelessly articulated a vast body of ideas about man and the cosmos. It is appropriate here to interrupt the historical narrative in order to summarize these formulations, which played an important role in the subsequent development of his teaching, even as Gurdjieff changed the outer forms and certain inner emphases in his direct work with pupils. Also, to a limited extent, these ideas throw light on developments that came later, some of which have given rise to unnecessary confusion in the minds of outside observers. One caveat, however, is necessary. If in his writings Gurdjieff never sought merely to spread out a philosophical system, all the more in his direct work with pupils did he mercilessly resist the role of guru,

preacher, or schoolteacher. *In Search of the Miraculous* shows, with considerable force, that Gurdjieff always gave his ideas to his pupils under conditions designed to break through the crust of emotional and intellectual associations which, he taught, shut out the small voice of conscience in man. The exquisite and often awesome precision with which he was able to break through that crust—ways of behaving with his pupils that were, in turn, shocking, mysterious, frightening, magical, delicately gentle, and omniscient—remains one of the principal factors around which both the Gurdjieff legend and the misunderstandings about him have arisen, as well as being the element most written about by those who came in touch with him and most imitated in the current age of “new religions.”

The Gurdjieff Ideas

It is true enough to say that Gurdjieff’s system of ideas is complex and all-encompassing, but one must immediately add that their formulation is designed to point man toward a central and simple power of apprehension which Gurdjieff taught is merely latent within the human mind and which is the only power by which man can actually understand himself in relation to the universe. In this sense, the distinction between doctrine and method, which is fairly clear in most of the older spiritual traditions, does not yet entirely obtain in the Gurdjieff teaching. The formulations of the ideas are themselves meant to have a special action on the sense of self and may therefore be regarded as part of the practical method. This characteristic of the Gurdjieff teaching reflects what Gurdjieff perceived as the center of gravity of modern man’s subjectivity—the fact that modern civilization is lopsidedly oriented around the thinking function. Modern man’s illusory feeling of “I” is built up around his thoughts and therefore, in accordance with the level of the pupil, the ideas themselves are meant to affect this false sense of self. For Gurdjieff the deeply penetrating influence of scientific thought in modern life was not something merely to be deplored, but to be understood as the channel through which the eternal Truth must first find its way toward the human heart.

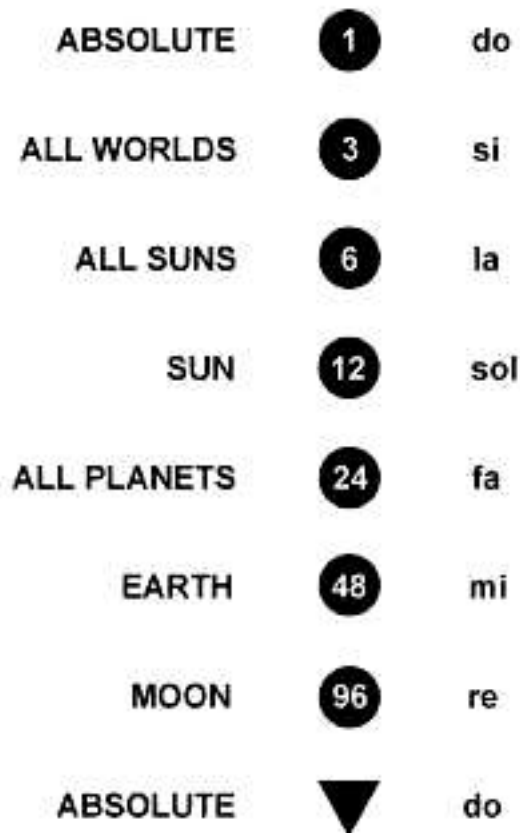
Man, Gurdjieff taught, is an undeveloped creation. He is not really man, considered as a cosmically unique being whose intelligence and power of action mirror the energies of the source of life itself. On the contrary, man as we encounter him is an automaton. His thoughts, feelings, and deeds are little more than mechanical reactions to external and internal stimuli. He cannot *do* anything. In and around him, everything *happens* without the participation of his own authentic consciousness. But human beings are ignorant of this state of affairs because of the pervasive influence of culture and education, which engrave in them the illusion of autonomous conscious selves. In short, man is asleep. There is no authentic *I am* in his presence, but only an egoism which masquerades as the authentic self, and whose machinations poorly imitate the normal human functions of thought, feeling, and will.

Many factors reinforce this sleep. Each of the reactions that proceed in one’s presence is accompanied by a deceptive sense of I—man is many I’s, each imagining itself to be the whole, and each buffered off from awareness of the others. Each of these many I’s represents a process whereby the subtle energy of consciousness is absorbed and degraded, a process that Gurdjieff termed “identification.” Man identifies—that is, squanders his conscious energy, with every passing thought, impulse, and sensation. This state of affairs takes the form of a continuous self-deception and a continuous procession of egoistic

emotions, such as anger, self-pity, sentimentality, and fear which are of such a pervasively painful nature that man is constantly driven to ameliorate this condition through the endless pursuit of social recognition, sensory pleasure, or the vague and unrealizable goal of “happiness.”

According to Gurdjieff, the human condition cannot be understood apart from considering humanity within the function of organic life on earth. The human being is constructed to transform energies of a specific nature, and neither his potential inner development nor his present actual predicament is understandable apart from this function. Thus, in the teaching of Gurdjieff, psychology is inextricably connected with cosmology and metaphysics and even, in a certain sense, biology. The diagram known as “the Ray of Creation” provides one of the conceptual keys to approaching this interconnection between humanity and the universal order, and as such invites repeated study from a variety of angles and stages of understanding.

In this diagram, the fundamental data about the universe gathered by science, and specifically the principal cosmic entities that modern astronomical observation has marked out, are arranged in a manner coherent with ancient metaphysical principles about humanity’s actual place in the scheme of creation. The reader is referred to chapters 5, 7, and 9 in *In Search of the Miraculous* for an explanation of this diagram, but the point to be emphasized here is that, at the deepest level, the human mind and heart are enmeshed in a concatenation of causal influences of enormous scale and design. A study of the Ray of Creation makes it clear that the aspects of human nature through which one typically attempts to improve one’s lot are without any force whatever within the network of universal influences that act upon man on earth. In this consists man’s fundamental illusion, an illusion only intensified by the technological achievements of modern science. Man is simply unable to draw upon the conscious energies passing through him, which in the cosmic scheme, are those possessing the actual power of causal efficacy. Man does not and cannot participate consciously in the great universal order, but instead is tossed about *en masse* for purposes limited to the functions of organic life on earth as a whole. Even in this relatively limited sphere—limited, that is, when compared to man’s latent destiny—mankind has become progressively incapable of fulfilling its function, a point that Gurdjieff strongly emphasized in his own writings. This aspect of the Ray of Creation—namely, that the “fate of the earth” is somehow bound up with the possibility of the inner evolution of individual men and women—resonates with the contemporary sense of impending planetary disasters.

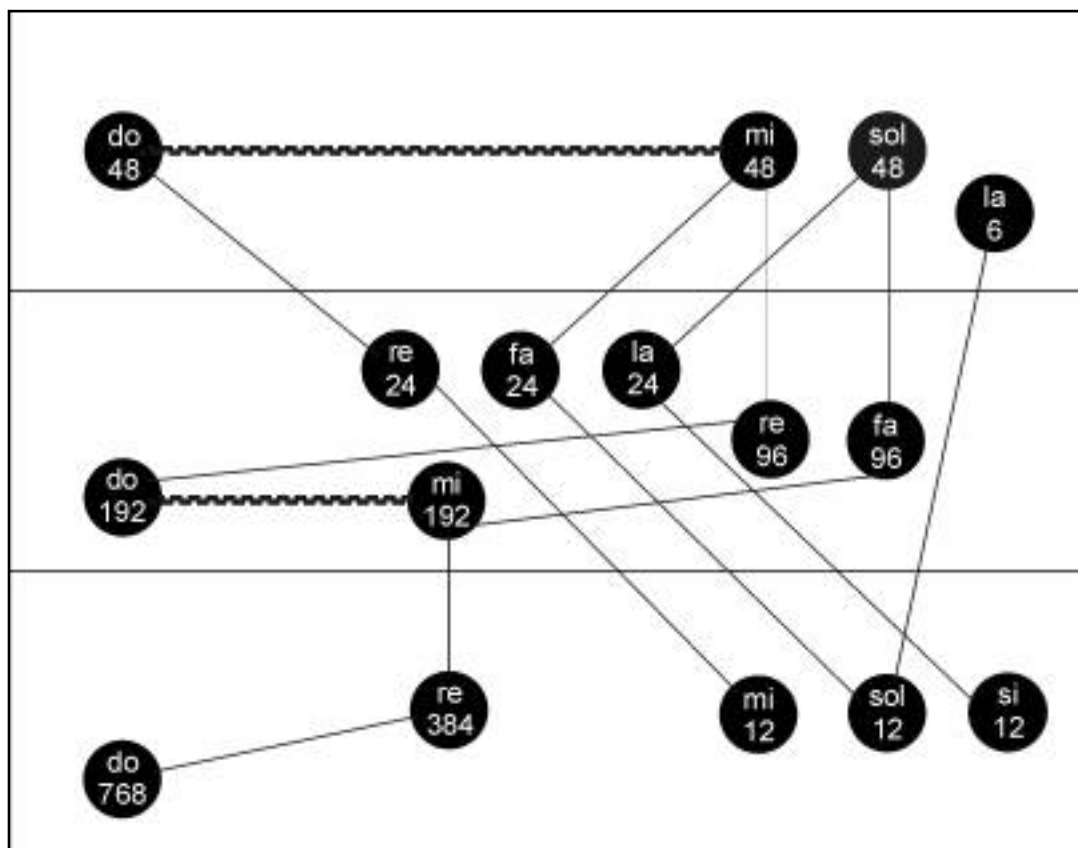


“The Ray of Creation” in the teaching of Gurdjieff: The Absolute is the fundamental source of all creation. From the Absolute the process of cosmic creation branches and descends (involves) according to an ordered sequence of increasing complexity and density, following the law of the octave. The universe as a whole comprises countless such branchings from the Absolute; this particular diagram represents the “ray” containing our planet earth.

How are human beings to change this state of affairs and begin drawing on the universal conscious energies which they are built to absorb but which now pass through them untransformed? How is humanity to assume its proper place in the great chain of being? Gurdjieff’s answer to these questions actually circumscribes the central purpose of his teaching—namely, that human life on earth may now stand at a major transitional point comparable perhaps to the fall of the great civilizations of the past and that development of the whole being of man (rather than one or another of the separate human functions) is the only thing that can permit man to pass through this transition in a manner worthy of human destiny.

But whereas the descent of humanity takes place *en masse*, ascent or evolution is possible only within the individual. *In Search of the Miraculous* presents a series of diagrams dealing with the same energies and laws as the Ray of Creation, not only as a cosmic ladder of descent but also in their evolutionary aspect *within the individual*. In these diagrams, known collectively as the Food Diagram, Ouspensky explains in some detail how Gurdjieff regarded the energy transactions within the individual human organism. As in the Ray of Creation, the Food Diagram arranges the data of modern science, in this case the science of physiology, in a manner that subsumes these data naturally within the immensely vast scale of ancient

metaphysical and cosmological principles. Again, the reader is referred to Ouspensky's book, the point being that humanity can begin to occupy its proper place within the chain of being only through an inner work with the specific intrapsychic energies that correspond to the higher energies in the cosmic order and which within the individual human being may be subsumed under the general term *attention*. The many levels of attention possible for man, up to and including an attention that in traditional teachings has been termed Spirit, are here ranged along a dynamic, vertical continuum that reaches from the level of biological sustenance which humans require for their physical bodies up to the incomparably finer sustenance that they require for the inner growth of the soul. This finer substance is termed "the food of impressions," a deceptively matter-of-fact phrase that eventually defines man's unique cosmic obligation and potentiality of constantly and in everything working for the development within himself of the divine attributes of devotion to the Good and objective understanding of the Real.



"The Food Diagram" in the teaching of Gurdjieff: the culmination of a series of diagrams illustrating the manner in which different qualities of energy are assimilated and evolve (following the law of the octave) in the human organism. This diagram represents the energy transactions in a moment of authentic consciousness.

The Ray of Creation and the Food Diagram, extraordinary though they are, are only a small part of the body of ideas contained in *In Search of the Miraculous*. They are cited here as examples of how Gurdjieff not only restated the ancient, perennial teachings in a language adapted to the modern mind but also brought to these ancient principles something of such colossal originality that those who followed him detected in his teaching the signs of what in Western terminology may be designated a new revelation.

However, as was indicated above, the organic interconnection of the ideas in *In Search of the Miraculous* is communicated not principally through conceptual argument but as a gradual unfolding which Ouspensky experienced to the extent that there arose within him that agency of inner unity which Gurdjieff called “the real I,” the activation of which required of Ouspensky a rigorous and ego-shattering inner work under the guidance of Gurdjieff and the group conditions he created for his pupils. Each of the great ideas in the book leads to the others. The Ray of Creation and the Food Diagram are inseparable from Gurdjieff’s teaching about the fundamental law of three forces and the law of the sevenfold development of energy (the Law of Octaves), and the interrelation of these laws as expressed in the symbol of the *enneagram*. The reflection of these ideas in man is inseparable from Gurdjieff’s teaching about the tripartite division of human nature, the three “centers” of mind, feeling, and body, and the astonishing account of how Gurdjieff structured the conditions of group work is inseparable from the idea of his work as a manifestation of the Fourth Way, a spiritual path distinct from the traditionally familiar paths termed “the way of the fakir,” “the way of the monk,” and “the way of the yogi.”

The notion of the Fourth Way is one of the Gurdjieff ideas that have captured the imagination of contemporary people and have brought quite a new meaning to the idea of esotericism itself. The meaning of this idea is perhaps best approached by resuming the narrative of Gurdjieff’s life, with special attention given to the conditions of work which he created for his pupils.

Gurdjieff’s own written statement of his teaching will be discussed below. But first it should be reemphasized that the diagnosis of the human condition which Gurdjieff brought and the means for human regeneration revolve around the quality and level of man’s *being*. This central aspect of Gurdjieff’s mission and his person seems to beggar description in words. The cosmological ideas are only one indication that what is at issue is a level of consciousness and energy within man and the universe that is unknown to modern psychology. There exists a particular Gurdjieffian “atmosphere” in his own writings, and in most accounts of his work with pupils, which evokes in some readers the same overall feeling and intellectual intuition that accompanies those unique experiences in life when the whole sense of oneself, including one’s familiar religious sense and sense of mystery, breaks down and when for a moment an unnamable emptiness and silence are experienced. The Gurdjieff teaching may perhaps be understood as a journey into and beyond that silence along with and by means of the demand to attend to the ordinary life of ourselves as we are. In any case, this central aspect of his teaching explains in part why at a certain level no comparisons of his teaching with traditional spiritualities are possible, while at deeper levels his ideas are being claimed by some activist followers of all the traditions and denied by others as spiritually invalid. The point is that this special “atmosphere” represents and manifests *being* and calls to that in a person which yearns for “something” that does not seem possible for one to find under most “known” forms of religion, science, psychology, and occultism.

After a brief period in Constantinople, Gurdjieff and his group of pupils made their way through Europe and finally settled in France where, in 1922, he established his [Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man](#) at the Chateau du Prieuré at Fontainebleau near Avon, just outside Paris. The brief, intense period of activity at the Prieuré has been described in numerous books, but even for those familiar with these accounts, the establishment and day-to-day activities of the Prieuré still evoke astonishment. It was

during this period that Gurdjieff developed many of the methods and practices of group work that have retained a central place in the work of Gurdjieff pupils throughout the world today, including many of the movements or sacred dances that he reconstituted on the basis of his initiatic experience in monasteries and schools of awakening in Asia and the Levant. All serious accounts of the conditions Gurdjieff created at the Prieuré give the impression of a community life pulsating with the uncompromising search for truth engaging all sides of human nature—demanding physical work, intensive emotional interactions, and the study of a vast range of ideas about humanity and the universal world. These accounts invariably speak of the encounter with oneself that these conditions made possible and the experience of the self which accompanied this encounter.

The Prieuré attracted numerous artists and literary figures from America and England, many of whom were sent by P. D. Ouspensky who by that time had broken with Gurdjieff and was leading his own groups in London. Concerning his break with Gurdjieff, which is described with forceful compactness in *In Search of the Miraculous*, and pending a survey discussion below of Gurdjieff's leading pupils, there are many indications that at the deepest personal level Ouspensky maintained a spiritual connection with Gurdjieff. But as one close observer has remarked,

As early as 1918 ... Ouspensky began to feel that a break with Gurdjieff was inevitable, that "he had to go"—to seek another teacher or to work independently. The break between the two men, teacher and pupil, each of whom received much from the other, has never been satisfactorily explained. They met for the last time in Paris in 1930.²

The rationale that lay behind the conditions Gurdjieff created for his pupils, that is to say, the idea of the Fourth Way, can perhaps be characterized by citing the [descriptive brochure published at the Prieuré in 1922](#):

The civilization of our time, with its unlimited means for extending its influence, has wrenched man from the normal conditions in which he should be living. It is true that civilization has opened up for man new paths in the domain of knowledge, science and economic life, and thereby enlarged his world perception. But, instead of raising him to a higher all-round level of development, civilization has developed only certain sides of his nature to the detriment of other faculties, some of which it has destroyed altogether....

... modern man's world perception and his own mode of living are not the conscious expression of his being taken as a complete whole. Quite on the contrary, they are only the unconscious manifestation of one or another part of him.

From this point of view our psychic life, both as regards our world perception and our expression of it, fails to present an unique and indivisible whole, that is to say a whole acting both as a common repository of all our perceptions and as the source of all our expressions. On the contrary, it is divided into three separate entities, which have nothing to do with one another, but are distinct both as regards their functions and their constituent

substances.

These three entirely separate sources of the intellectual, emotional and instinctive or moving life of man, each taken in the sense of the whole set of functions proper to them, are called by the system under notice the thinking, the emotional and the moving centers.³

It is difficult conceptually, and in a few words, to communicate the meaning of this idea of the three centers, which is so central to the Gurdjieffian path. The modern person simply has no conception of how self-deceptive a life can be that is lived in only one part of oneself. The head, the emotions, and the body each have their own perceptions and actions, and each in itself, can live a simulacrum of human life. In the modern era this has gone to an extreme point and most of the technical and material progress of our culture serves to push the individual further into only one of the centers—one third, as it were, of one's real self-nature. The growth of vast areas of scientific knowledge is, according to Gurdjieff, outweighed by the diminution of the conscious space and time within which one lives and experiences oneself. With an ever-diminishing "I," man gathers an ever-expanding corpus of information about the universe. But to be human—to be a whole self possessed of moral power, will, and intelligence—requires all the centers, and *more*. This *more* is communicated above all in Gurdjieff's own writings in which the levels of spiritual development possible for man are connected with a breathtaking vision of the levels of possible service that the developing individual is called on to render to mankind and to the universal source of creation itself.

Thus, the proper relationship of the three centers of cognition in the human being is a necessary precondition for the reception and realization of what in the religions of the world has been variously termed the Holy Spirit, Atman, and the Buddha nature.

The conditions Gurdjieff created for his pupils cannot be understood apart from this fact. "I wished to create around myself," Gurdjieff wrote, "conditions in which a man would be continuously reminded of the sense and aim of his existence by an unavoidable friction between his conscience and the automatic manifestations of his nature."⁴ Deeply buried though it is, the awakened conscience is the *something more* which, according to Gurdjieff, is the only force in modern man's nearly completely degenerate psyche that can actually bring parts of his nature together and open him to that energy and unnamable awareness of which all the religions have always spoken as the gift that descends from above, but which in the conditions of modern life is almost impossible to receive.

The most active period of the Prieuré lasted less than two years, ending with Gurdjieff's nearly fatal motor accident on July 6, 1924. In order to situate this period properly, it is necessary to look back once again to the year 1909 when Gurdjieff had finished his twenty-one years of traveling throughout Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe meeting individuals and visiting communities who possessed knowledge unsuspected by most people. By 1909 Gurdjieff had learned secrets of the human psyche and of the universe that he knew to be necessary for the future welfare of humanity, and he set himself the task of transmitting them to those who could use them rightly. After trying to cooperate with existing societies, he decided to create an organization of his own. He started in 1911 in Tashkent, where he had

established a reputation as a wonder-worker and an authority on “questions of the Beyond.” He moved to Moscow in 1913 and after the revolution of February 1917 there began his astonishing journeys through the war-torn Caucasus region, principally Essentuki and Tiflis, leading a band of his pupils to Constantinople and finally to France, where he reopened his institute at the Chateau de Prieuré at Avon. His avowed aim during this period was to set up a worldwide organization for the dissemination of his ideas and the training of helpers. The motor accident of July 1924 occurred at this critical juncture.

When he began to recover from his injuries, Gurdjieff was faced with the sheer impossibility of realizing his plans for the institute. His health was shattered; he had no money; and many of his friends and pupils had abandoned him. He was a stranger in Europe, neither speaking its languages nor understanding its ways. He made the decision to find a new way of transmitting to posterity what he had learned about humanity, human nature, and human destiny. This was to be done by writing. His period as an author began in December of 1924 and continued until, in May 1935, he stopped writing and changed all his plans.

Gurdjieff's Writings

While he was still recuperating from his injuries, Gurdjieff began his work as a writer, dictating to his secretary Olga de Hartmann the opening lines of his most important book, [*Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*](#). His two later books, *Meetings with Remarkable Men* and the unfinished *Life is Real Only Then When 'I Am,'* have major aspects about them that are accessible only to pupils of the teaching—this is overwhelmingly true of the latter. But *Beelzebub* was written for the world.

It is an immense and unique work in every sense of the term. Cast as an allegory, it is the narrative of the once fiery rebel Beelzebub, who for his youthful indiscretion spent long years in our solar system, where, among his other activities, he had occasion to study that very minor planet Earth and its inhabitants. In these tales to his young grandson, Beelzebub comes back constantly to the causes of man's alienation from the sources of his own life and, at the same time, points in the direction toward which man could consciously evolve. Touching on one after another of the myriad aspects of human history from its earliest beginnings to modern times, Beelzebub continually brings his perceptions back to the same cosmic laws that govern both the working of nature and the psychic life of humans and, in so doing, bodies forth the picture of a living and conscious universe. In this universe, humanity, falling further away from an understanding of its source and the place it can occupy, has forgotten its function and lost all sense of its direction.

Beelzebub traces this failure with compassion and often with superb humor. His tenderness toward the undeveloped possibility represented by his grandson strikes the underlying note of the book, which is one of deep concern for the fulfillment of the individual human life.

This bare summary can give no impression of the extraordinary nature of this book. Intentionally written in complex, intricate style and making frequent use of strange-sounding neologisms, the book gradually yields its meanings only after repeated readings. Each reading of it opens new facets of Gurdjieff's

teaching, not only in intellectual terms but at deep, subconscious levels.

Gurdjieff's Influence

During the writing of *Beelzebub's Tales*, Gurdjieff continued to live and receive pupils at the Prieuré and remained based there until 1933. During this period—between 1924 and 1933—[A. R. Orage](#) had gone to America, where he attracted a number of serious pupils, and where he made known the Gurdjieff teaching to some of America's leading artists and writers. At the same time, Ouspensky was in London lecturing and working to form his own school (it was through Ouspensky that Orage had first come into contact with the Gurdjieff teaching). Among the other well-known figures who studied under Ouspensky were [Maurice Nicoll](#), [Kenneth Walker](#), and P. L. Travers. Nicoll later went on to lead his own groups and write several influential books that reflected his work with the Gurdjieff ideas: *The New Man*, a pioneering study of the parables of Christ, and *Living Time*, which developed Ouspensky's theories about the dimensions of space and time.

In France, during the 1920s, Gurdjieff's institute had already suffered some notoriety when he accepted the dying Katherine Mansfield into the community of the Prieuré. Although Gurdjieff shunned publicity, a number of press accounts of life at the Prieuré, some foolish and slanderous, appeared in France and England in the early 1920s. After the automobile accident, however, and the consequent closing down of the intensive activities of the institute, Gurdjieff's work as a teacher attracted less public attention. In the late 1920s and early 1930s several other well-known writers became pupils, notably [René Daumal](#), Margaret Anderson, and Kathryn Hulme. Daumal's writings, especially his unfinished masterpiece, [Mount Analogue](#), are among the most vital and reliable literary expressions of certain key aspects of the Gurdjieff teaching.

In 1932 Gurdjieff left the Prieuré and settled in Paris, which was to remain his base until his death in 1949. By 1933, Orage had separated from Gurdjieff after some years of working with groups in America. He died in England in 1934. The work of Ouspensky, however, went on in London and then later also in New York. Ouspensky's book [Tertium Organum](#) had been published with considerable success in England in the early 1920s and had established his reputation as a writer about metaphysical subjects. This book, much of it written before he had met Gurdjieff, maintained its popularity throughout the 1930s and 1940s and deserves special consideration, both as an important philosophical work in its own right and as a clue to the nature of Gurdjieff's influence upon those who became his close pupils.

Writing in the early part of the twentieth century, long before experiments with altered states of consciousness became a widespread aspect of the "new religions" movement, Ouspensky was seriously experimenting with altered states of consciousness and their effect on perception and cognition. His own experiences brought him to the conclusion that new forms and categories of thought were needed, quite apart from the two modes of thought (classical and positivistic) that had dominated Western civilization for over two thousand years. *Tertium Organum* is the fruit of these experiments. The book is dominated by the idea of higher dimensions, "eternal recurrence," and the insight that higher forms of knowledge must inevitably be associated with the development of the capacity for feeling—that is to say, the

perception of truth is inseparable from the development of inner moral power. These basic ideas are developed in full in the book and, in one form or another, have entered as an influence into the writings of many modern philosophers and writers both in the West and in Russia. What distinguishes this book is not only the force of Ouspensky's vision but the fact that it was rooted in his own experience, rather than solely from reflecting on traditional ideas. Thus Ouspensky may be considered a modern pioneer in what can be called "inner empiricism," a mode of philosophizing about the kind of metaphysical issues which scientific thought has largely dismissed, but which retains the scientific attitude that seeks to base all theory on actual experience and carefully conducted experiments. Ouspensky's inner world was his own metaphysical laboratory.

Of particular significance here, however, is the fact that the book, written before Ouspensky became a pupil of Gurdjieff, contains numerous ideas and formulations which later appear intact in Ouspensky's account in *In Search of the Miraculous* as elements of the Gurdjieff teaching. This raises the question of the kind of help that Gurdjieff offered to those who followed him and shows the exceptional degree to which Ouspensky was prepared for such a teaching. In Ouspensky's case, there is no doubt that he opened himself to the vast body of new ideas which Gurdjieff brought forth. But it is also clear that, at the same time, he retained a great deal of his own previously acquired understanding of the human situation and the universal order. Somehow, under Gurdjieff, the questions that Ouspensky had wrestled with and the new ideas he had come to were now situated in a broader and more balanced perspective, taking on subtle new shadings that made them, in his mind, far more precise and integrated within an immensely more comprehensive worldview. When compared with *Tertium Organum*, *In Search of the Miraculous* does not, therefore, represent a rupture in Ouspensky's thinking so much as an extraordinary flowering of it, whereby it became, so to say, an instrument serving a new aim and the vehicle for another quality of energy. He began as an imposing thinker, and after Gurdjieff he remained a powerful thinker who has also become a different kind of man. Comparable observations are germane as well in the case of the composer Thomas de Hartmann, the quality of whose musical talent underwent an astonishing transformation under Gurdjieff.

These observations may be of help to anyone trying to assess the extent and nature of Gurdjieff's influence, both on those who worked with him and on those who have come after him, as well as his place in spiritual currents of modern civilization. Much grief is in store for investigators who try to trace Gurdjieff's influence on the culture under more conventional rubrics. It is true that a growing number of people now espouse what might be called a Gurdjieffian philosophy or psychology, but to focus on this aspect of his influence is to miss the essential aspect of his work and the only true standard by which his impact on our culture can really be measured. Like the founders of every great spiritual path, he sought to awaken rather than to indoctrinate. The course of his life as teacher does not follow the logic of an individual seeking merely to spread a doctrine.

When therefore, it is admitted that Gurdjieff's influence has affected a great many fields and disciplines—such as religion, literature, psychology, philosophy, the visual arts, music, dance, etc.—it must be added that this influence does not represent a fanatical adherence to "Gurdjieffian" standards or ideals which are alien to the field at hand. The influence of Gurdjieff would show itself, rather, in certain underlying values and concerns—that is to say, in a deeper understanding of the work at hand rather than

an eccentric understanding.

How, then, to regard the most externally visible ways in which his ideas and formulations have entered into modern culture? It can be argued, for example, that the word “consciousness” acquired the spiritual connotations which it now has because of Gurdjieff’s use of the term to designate an aspect of the mind higher than ordinary thought. Or, as mentioned above, it is clear that his notion of the Fourth Way, that is, a rigorous spiritual discipline conducted in the midst of an individual’s ordinary life activities, has been adopted by numerous religious and psychoreligious groups throughout the West. His emphasis on the role of self-observation has also had widespread influence, to the extent that there is a vague, but common, understanding among spiritual seekers today that the alternatives of introspection or positivistic behaviorism by no means exhaust the possibilities of one’s ability to study and know oneself. In addition, modern concepts of group dynamics were strongly influenced by what he brought; indeed, the whole idea of the need for group work in order to affect psychological or behavioral change of any kind may be traced, in part, to Gurdjieff’s emphasis on the group, rather than the Oriental guru-disciple relationship, as indispensable to Western spiritual development. But just as Gurdjieff’s influence cannot be measured by the number of individuals who espouse his ideas, neither can his influence on the culture be measured by verbal formulations or concepts which he originated and which enjoy a certain fashion. Either Gurdjieff helped to create authentic men and women or he did not. The extent to which he did so is the extent to which his influence is to be valued.

Gurdjieff’s School

Having opened the question of how to regard the influence of Gurdjieff, it is now possible to speak briefly about the chief means by which his influence may become a factor in our civilization. Obviously the term “school,” when applied to the Gurdjieff teaching, does not and cannot refer only to a loosely connected group of followers sharing intellectual beliefs or attitudes. The term has a very precise meaning in the Gurdjieff teaching, somewhat akin to the meaning of “monastery,” “ashram,” or “brotherhood” as they are used in the history of religious tradition, or as they are applied, say, to the school of Pythagoras or the schools of the medieval and Renaissance painters. It is through a group of individuals studying and working together at varying levels that the transmission of his teaching was intended to take place. As has already been noted, it is clear that he did not believe Western man could be spiritually helped past a certain point by the traditional Eastern forms of relationship between a guru and an individual pupil. At the same time, he strongly emphasized that guidance was indispensable and that no one individual could hope to attain liberation working alone. A “school,” considered to be a dynamic ordering of precise moral, psychological, and physical conditions within which a relatively small number of individuals can interact for the sake of self-development, became the principal form of transmission. Only such conditions, Gurdjieff taught, could allow older, more experienced pupils to pass on their understanding as part of their own inner work, while enabling all parties to take into account the ever-present tendencies to inattention, suggestibility, and fantasy. The Gurdjieff “school” thus represents an attempt to establish a school of awakening specifically adapted to modern life—with all the tension and paradox that phrase suggests when taken within the overwhelmingly materialistic context of modern civilization, that is, its overwhelming and omnipresent tendency to draw men and women out of

themselves toward externals, instead of calling them back to the sources of the spirit.

Although a number of well-known individuals have been and are associated with the Gurdjieff *Work*, as the school is called following the meaning of the word in the alchemical tradition, many of Gurdjieff's leading pupils have chosen to remain unknown to the public, as have many of the leaders who represent the second and third generation of the teaching. Attempts to portray the nature of the membership by citing only those figures known to the public can therefore be misleading. As a general rule, those engaged in the *Work* pursue their ordinary lives without calling attention to their affiliation.

The Gurdjieff Foundation

After Gurdjieff's death in Paris in 1949, his work was carried on by his closest pupil and collaborator, Jeanne de Salzmann, under whose guidance centers of study were gradually established in Paris, New York, London, and Caracas. Over the past fifty years other centers of work have radiated from them in major cities of the Western world. The pupils living in America established the Gurdjieff Foundation of New York in 1953. Shortly thereafter, groups were started on the West Coast and in Canada. Similar branches of varying size have been formed throughout the world and at present there may be between five and ten thousand persons in the Americas, Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and the Middle East studying this teaching under the guidance of pupils who worked personally with Gurdjieff when he was alive. The main centers of study remain Paris, New York, and London because of the relatively large concentration of first-generation Gurdjieff pupils in these cities. Most of the groups maintain close correspondence with the principal centers, usually in relationship to one or two of the pupils who often travel to specific cities in order to guide the work of these groups. The general articulation of these various groups, both within America and throughout the world, is a cooperative one, rather than one based on strictly sanctioned jurisdictional control. There are also groups who no longer maintain close correspondence and operate independently.

The Gurdjieff Foundation offers its students a variety of activities whose form and emphasis change to some extent in response to cultural conditions and individual needs. Usually, inquiries and experiments are conducted in small groups under conditions that have the potential for developing in each individual the faculty of attention. As has already been indicated, the Gurdjieff teaching offers a remarkably comprehensive psychology of levels of attention and a many-sided practical method for developing access to this power in relationship to the three basic sources of perception in the human psyche—the three centers.

From the outset, pupils are encouraged and assisted in the study of the liberation of attention, which remains unexplored in the conditions of modern life. Such work is understood to be indispensable for what Gurdjieff called "self-observation." In fact, as has also been indicated, Gurdjieff taught that this is a universal and essential discipline, which was conveyed by Socrates and ancient teachings in the words of the Delphic oracle—"Know thyself"—as well as in the Gospels under the cryptic one-word command *gregoreite* (awake) and in Buddhism under the designation *nana dhasana* (vision). But although clear enough to initiate in these ancient traditions, it is practically inaccessible to a modern Western-educated

individual. The many and various forms of work offered by the Gurdjieff Foundation are understood as a way for modern people to grasp and put into practical use this discipline which is said to be literally indispensable to real progress in the regenerate life.

The Gurdjieff Foundation approaches the question of obedience and authority, which is of such concern in the modern world, in this context. By voluntarily subjecting oneself to such a work of self-study, the student may come to realize that not only is one responsible for one's own work, and that on one level the student can and must rely only on himself or herself but also that on a larger scale the student is entirely dependent on the help of others similarly engaged. Thus, in essence and in actual practice, nothing is given to a student unless the student asks for it, and then only after the student has studied the theory of the teaching sufficiently to understand intellectually the nature of the help being asked for.

Related to this orientation is the basic Gurdjieff idea of a "Way in Life," which, as has been mentioned, has exerted considerable influence, under varying interpretations, on many new religious and psychological movements in the Western world. As practiced by the Foundation, it means that the student seeks to understand life as it is, without attempting to alter anything in the name of inner development. Relationships to family, vocation, personal ties, and obligations are, at least to start with, left intact both for the material they provide for self-understanding and for the ultimate value and force that all human relationships contain when they are engaged in with a more central and harmonious attention.

The activities of the Foundation include the study of the Gurdjieff ideas, group meetings, study of the movements and sacred dances left by Gurdjieff, music, crafts and household work, the study of traditions, public demonstrations of work, and work with children and young people.

In group meetings students verify the authenticity of their observations through expressing them in the presence of others. The place of group leader is taken by one or several experienced pupils, and great care is taken that these meetings do not revolve around the person of the leader or turn into speculative, psychological discussions or encounters. These meetings have little in common with either group therapy sessions or with religious / spiritual meetings in their known forms.

Crafts and household work are engaged in principally as a means of throwing light on the details of everyday life and to expose the cumulative force of self-illusion and passivity that holds sway even in the most "favorable" stations of life.

Gurdjieff reconstituted the "movements" exercises he had met with in Central Asia for his own pupils under intensive conditions of inner discipline. Through the guidance of Jeanne de Salzmann (1889–1990) and Jessmin Howarth (1892–1984), the Foundation has taken precautions to transmit these exercises under comparable conditions as part of the central aim of developing the moral and spiritual power of individuals through the study and growth of the attention factor in the human organism. It is assumed that without the help of prepared teachers and without a solid connection to the ideas and the inner work, the practice of the movements cannot give the results intended. Therefore, at present, the movements are

studied mainly at the principal established centers. Under Jeanne de Salzmann, a series of films documenting the movements has been made in order to preserve a record of the quality of inner work that the movements demand.

Group meetings and, where they are taught, the movements are comparatively invariant forms of practice of the Gurdjieff Foundation. The numerous other forms show more variety from center to center, depending on the makeup of the group and the specific line of inquiry that is held to be most useful at a given time or place.

The membership of the Gurdjieff Foundation worldwide exhibits considerable diversity with respect to social class, age, occupation, and educational background, although exact statistics are unavailable. Like Gurdjieff himself during his life, the Foundation attracts the interest of a surprisingly wide variety of people.

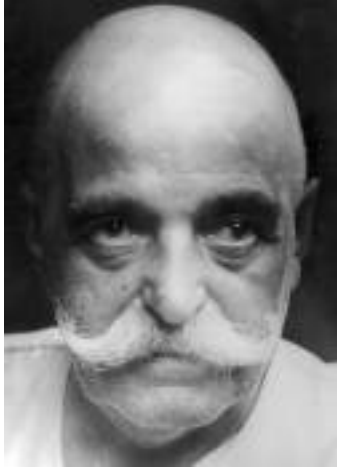
Notes

1. Review of the film *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, in *Material for Thought*, San Francisco: Far West Editions, Spring 1980, No. 8, p. 86.
2. John Pentland, entry on P. D. Ouspensky in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, New York: Macmillan, 1987, Vol. 11, p. 143; [Gurdjieff International Review, Vol. II \(2\)](#), January 1999, pp. 5–6.
3. *G. Gurdjieff's Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man: Prospectus No. 1*, p. 3 (privately printed, 1922); [Gurdjieff International Review, Vol. I \(1\)](#), October 1997.
4. G. I. Gurdjieff, *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, New York: Dutton, 1969, p. 270.

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[Jacob Needleman](#) is Professor of Philosophy at San Francisco State University and the author of many influential books, including *The New Religions* (1970), *The Heart of Philosophy* (1982), *Money and the Meaning of Life* (1991, Rev. 1994). His most recent work is *Time and the Soul* (1998). This essay was previously published in *Modern Esoteric Spirituality* edited by Antoine Faivre and Jacob Needleman, New York: Crossroad, 1992. It is republished here with the kind permission of the author.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Gurdjieff as Survivalist

by James Moore

GEORGE IVANOVITCH GURDJIEFF died on 29 October 1949. And he is gone? Altogether gone? No, he is here! There prevails over his physical dissolution a subtly alive influence for which ‘Gurdjieff’ is an apt signifier. Better still, there are moments when the silent, cultivated, self-communing of his many disciples persuades him back into a Now quite as valid as the Now he inhabited. This is not a matter of faith or holograms or abnormal psychology but simply of opening to what is. In the primordial affirmation of Lord Krishna: “The unreal has no being, the real never ceases to be.”

Such buoyancy was not always easy. As Gurdjieff’s funeral service at the Alexandre Nevski Cathedral ended and the priest closed the *ikonostasis* a local electricity failure plunged the *arrondissement* into the darkness of a winter’s night — an untoward blackness in which his adversaries jubilantly construed the snuffing out of Gurdjieff’s influence and power of action. *Kaputt!* Happily there were, even then, candles of a countervailing hope cherished by his closest pupils, but these were afforded no cultural oxygen whatsoever. In that far off epoch (when black berets so conspicuously out-sold Astrakhan hats, and Jean-Paul Sartre had a celebrity telephone installed at his *Cafe de Flore* table) no savant in Paris was arguably more *de trop* than Gurdjieff: his ritualised ‘Toasts to the Idiots,’ his classes in Sacred Dance, and his Homeric epic [Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson](#), had aroused no flutter of serious critical interest. To most ideological tipsters his historical oblivion seemed a racing certainty....

[The complete text is available in the [printed copy](#) of this issue.]

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Gurdjieff

International Review

April 2000 Issue, Vol. III No. 2

In Memoriam: Some Pupils of Gurdjieff

Editorial Introduction

Our tenth issue continues our memorial focus on Gurdjieff in recognition of the 50th year since his death in Paris on October 29, 1949. In this issue, we draw upon accounts of some of Gurdjieff's first generation pupils. All back issues are available in their entirety as [printed copies](#).

Jane Heap

As Remembered by Some of Those She Taught [Sample Only]

A. L. Staveley recalls vivid impressions of her work with Jane Heap in London during World War II which prepared her to meet Gurdjieff in 1946. This sketch was first published in *Jane Heap 1887–1964: As remembered by some of those she taught* by Two Rivers Press, 1988 in a limited edition and is reproduced here with their kind permission.

Threads of Time

Recollections of Jeanne de Salzman

In this excerpt from his autobiography, *Threads of Time*, Peter Brook—who had attended Jane Heap's group for more than a decade—offers a succinct and vivid cameo of Jeanne de



Pencil sketch of Gurdjieff by Ziga Valishevsky, circa 1919

*The greater the height to which
Beelzebub goes, the more the
confusion of our usual jumble of
ideas is dispelled. What emerges
is the opposite—we see in high
relief what was previously
screened and misunderstood. The
high has illuminated the low.
Infinite spaces have ceased to
frighten us.*

Manuel Rainoid

*I can too easily assume that this
“I AM” of Gurdjieff’s (or of the
Bible) is all about me and my
personal development. It may
take years of inner work to come
to the realization that this self-
centered attitude of mine is the
greatest barrier between me and
the impersonal highest in me,*

Salzmann who was close to Gurdjieff for thirty years.

William & Louise Welch

Patty Welch Llosa provides a candid glimpse of her parents as well as an account of their roles as leaders of Gurdjieff groups.

For Dr. William J. Welch

Roger Lipsey's eulogy of Dr. Welch is deeply felt and conveys a life vibrantly lived. It was delivered during Dr. Welch's funeral at St. Thomas church in New York City on July 12, 1997 and here includes biographical details that were unnecessary on that occasion.

A Remembrance of W. A. Nyland In the Ear and Eye of the Beholder

Terry Winter Owens, former student of Willem Nyland, notes that "With the passage of half a century since the death of Gurdjieff, it becomes increasingly obvious that there now flourish a number of different threads of the Gurdjieff work... As yet, little has been written about W. A. Nyland although he had a profound impact on many people."

Louise March

Louise March was Gurdjieff's only follower fluent in German, and the translation of *Beelzebub's Tales* into that language fell largely to her. In the late 1950s, she established a community in upper state New York named the Rochester Folk Art Guild. A group of her pupils offer a brief account of her life followed by selections of her writing and sayings.

Pamela Travers

The Gurdjieff Society of London offers an account of Pamela Travers—the creator of *Mary Poppins*—and points out how "her special skill in connecting or linking the pearls of spiritual

which he calls "I."

James George

Madame de Salzmann would always rise graciously to welcome a visitor. She would sit upright, still and contained, and would respond with laughter or seriousness, finding precisely the words and the idiom that corresponded to the age and understanding of the listener.

Peter Brook

Jane [Heap] seldom if ever said, "Go here—go there. Do this—do that." Her method of transmitting the teaching was to create learning situations, and from these you learned. Or did not learn, as the case might be.

Annie Lou Staveley

It's a question of emphasis. You put emphasis on its [negative emotion] strength, when it should more practically be on your weakness. And that relates to your understanding. All negative emotion has its momentum, but if you are there, it stops.

George Adie

The first step is to 'learn to listen,' to wish to listen, to wish to drop the chaos in oneself in the same way that we drop the body at physical death. This step

tradition ... was undoubtedly her greatest and perhaps her unique contribution.”

George Mountford Adie

Joseph Azize—a long-time student of George Adie—describes Mr. Adie’s practice of Gurdjieff’s teaching and his singular contribution to establishing the Work in Australia; in so doing, he offers valuable observations on the pupil-teacher relationship.

Dr. John Lester

David Kangas, a member of Two Rivers Farm, observes how the “fall of 1999 saw the passing of Dr. John R. Lester, and with his death we count one fewer who actually saw Gurdjieff with his own eyes, heard his voice with his own ears, sat at Gurdjieff’s table.”

Combining Good and Truth, Now An Homage to Maurice Nicoll

The author, Bob Hunter, was a student of Beryl Pogson—Maurice Nicoll’s secretary and biographer. He emphasizes that Nicoll’s “special contribution to the Fourth Way is that his teaching, by leavening the method transmitted by P. D. Ouspensky, helps people to value the Work [and] showed how to see the good of it.”

Other New Features

Gurdjieff Heralds the Awakening of Consciousness Now

James George writes for this issue taking a bird’s eye view of the influence of Gurdjieff’s teaching over the past eighty years and noting that “now the spreading is amplified by the electronic revolution of the Internet, for worse or for better. The spiritualization of the global village has begun. Suddenly, there

means that we won’t interfere any longer, will not change anything (in the beginning not even ourselves); that we will not quarrel, that we have no opinion to insist upon; that we will not translate what we hear into our automatic daily language—which would be equal to letting it go out the other ear.

Louise March

I have chosen to focus on what I remember and believe Mr. Nyland himself considered important: his unrelenting imperative to work on oneself and to do so correctly and in accordance with an accurate representation of inner effort and its relationship to the ideas as a whole.

Terry Winter Owens

He turned his full attention towards me, which, I can tell you, was considerable, and said “Is more important that you say I am, than is that you breathe.”

John Lester

The hours of sleep were short; the hours of labor long. Gurdjieff constantly pushed his pupils past their states of “imaginary fatigue,” and on through their “second wind” to real fatigue.

Gorham Munson

are rays to the sun everywhere. One of these rays—the one that has meant the most to me—is the ‘Work’ or teaching of Gurdjieff.”

Beelzebub, a Master Stroke
Belzébuth, un coup de maître
[Sample Only]

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April 1, 2000

In this penetrating examination of *Beelzebub's Tales*, Rainoird emphasizes that Gurdjieff's master work “cannot be read as we commonly read our books—and which simultaneously attracts and repels us.” Rainoird's commentary was first published as *Belzébuth, un coup de maître* in *Monde Nouveau* (Paris) October, 1956 as a review of the publication of the first French edition. This translation is the first to offer the complete text in English.

Copyright Conventions in an
Unconventional World: A Note about the
Writings of Gurdjieff and his Circle

Roger Lipsey, former editorial manager for Triangle Editions who hold copyright on Gurdjieff's writings, examines the question of legitimate and illegitimate publication of Gurdjieff's works.

Brother in Elysium: Orage in Gurdjieff's
Service
[Sample Only]

Michael Benham reviews Paul Beekman Taylor's *Brother in Elysium: Orage in Gurdjieff's Service* forthcoming Samuel Weiser, Winter 2000/2001. Drawing on a wealth of unpublished Orage family archives, Taylor assembles the most comprehensive Orage biography to date. He vividly reconstructs the 1922–1933 period to demonstrate that A. R. Orage's involvement with Gurdjieff was the natural evolution of his own search and not an aberration as presumed by Orage's literary biographers.

The Strange Cult of Gurdjieff: an Insider's Story of the Most Mysterious Religious Movement in the World

[Sample Only]

First published in *Practical Psychology Monthly* around 1937.

Although Gorham Munson propagates the false rumor that Gurdjieff was the Tibetan Lama Dorzhieff, his flamboyantly titled article presents the richest and most detailed account of the enigma of Gurdjieff available up to 1937. With more than ten years as a student of Orage's and occasional meetings with

Gurdjieff, including a summer spent with him in France, Munson, writing under the pseudonym "Armagnac," describes Gurdjieff's school at the Prieuré and the teaching presented there.

Around the Theatre The Voice of Moscow

[Sample Only]

On the first few pages of *In Search of the Miraculous*, P. D. Ouspensky describes his return to Russia in November of 1914 and how, working as a journalist, he came across this notice and put it in his newspaper that winter, shortly before his first meeting with Gurdjieff.



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Jane Heap

As Remembered by Some of Those She Taught

by A. L. Staveley

[Jane Heap](#) left no lectures, no books, only the notes she wrote down for herself. Her legacy was a living one, passed through her pupils. Her teaching touched one's feeling as well as thought. She had an exceptionally brilliant mind and a dazzling gift for exact formulation. She was an artist in words as well as materials of all kinds. The precision with which an idea was presented, the fact that it appeared as a picture rather than as verbal thought, was a little shock and entered a pupil as an unforgettable impression. For example, she could say of a man, "He is still tripping over his umbilical cord"—a phrase which said more than pages of psychologizing about over-devotion to a parent.

Jane told us, her pupils, that when she met the teaching in the person of Mr. Gurdjieff she turned her back on her old life, locked the studio on Long Island and painted no more. It was so, but nevertheless, hers was still the eye of an artist in all she did. And because she could see the design in all things she made us see it too. What she was interested in was Man—man as he is and Man as he could be—to, as she said many times, "the aching of the heart and the sickness of the stomach." Sometimes to "the sickness of the heart and the aching of the stomach." Her interest was real, never theoretical or lost in the realm of ideas....

[The complete text is available in the [printed copy](#) of this issue.]

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Threads of Time

Recollections of Jeanne de Salzmann

by Peter Brook

[In this excerpt from his autobiography, *Threads of Time*, Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 1998, pp. 108–111, Peter Brook—who had attended Jane Heap’s group for more than a decade—offers a succinct and vivid cameo of Jeanne de Salzmann who was close to Gurdjieff for thirty years. Brook’s narrative begins with the death of Jane Heap in 1964.]

Early one morning, time stopped. I picked up the phone, then turned to Natasha [Parry] to tell her that [Jane Heap](#) had died. The powerful magnet at the center of every activity was gone. “What were her last words?” we asked, only to realize at once the absurdity of the question, because the whole of a teacher’s life work is her only statement. There was grief, there was emptiness and a useless scramble to fill the void. But the pain of deprivation needed to be cherished and respected, and only after mourning was allowed its time and place could new lines of life emerge with their own determination.

“You will see,” said a friend when I first met [Madame de Salzmann](#), “she is like a fan, which gradually opens until more and more is revealed.” After Jane’s death, Natasha and I went frequently to Paris, where Gurdjieff’s work was being maintained with increasing intensity by Madame de Salzmann, who had been close to Gurdjieff since she had met him in the Caucasus during the First World War. Through her own unremitting struggle, she had gained the capacity to transmit to others a unique quality of experience, and I now made a vow to myself always to be available whenever the opportunity arose to be near her.

I would like to be able to draw a portrait with words of this remarkable person, but I know how inadequate this will be. In my work with actors, I have learned that impersonation only succeeds if it can capture the rigid areas in which a personality is imprisoned. Someone whose life flows freely has none of the rigidities on which imitations or even descriptions can comfortably hang.

Madame de Salzmann had achieved this freedom through a life devoted to the service of that unknown source of finer energy that can only become manifest when the human organism is completely

open—open in body, feeling, and thought. When this condition is reached, the individuality does not vanish; it is illuminated in every aspect and can play its true role, which is to bend and adapt to every changing need.

Madame de Salzmann would always rise graciously to welcome a visitor. She would sit upright, still and contained, and would respond with laughter or seriousness, finding precisely the words and the idiom that corresponded to the age and understanding of the listener. Her speaking was not for herself, she was never carried away by her own memories or her ideas; out of an awareness of what was needed, out of listening to the other person's state, she would speak directly to the person so as to evoke a meaning or encourage an action to arise. She was always present, as close as the need demanded—yet in this closeness she was never to be grasped. No one could hold her, and she held on to no one.

There are many reasons for describing a human being as “remarkable”; for Gurdjieff the essential quality of a remarkable man or woman was the capacity to watch equally over “the lamb and the wolf” in his or her care. To cherish the tenderness of the one and the ferocity of the other, to give to each its place, is only possible if there is a special kind of presence that reconciles, unites, and holds them both in balance. Often Madame de Salzmann would describe how at her first meeting with Gurdjieff, she had immediately recognized this remarkableness in him. From then on she had stayed by his side, working with him through a multitude of forms of teaching and conditions of life, watching over both the wolf and lamb.

At Gurdjieff's death, Madame de Salzmann found herself virtually alone, inheriting the gigantic and volcanic output that Gurdjieff had left behind. All over the world there were groups of students left rudderless, in a state of confusion that seemed destined to splinter, distort, and degrade the material that they had been given. There were unpublished writings, a bewildering quantity of musical compositions, an even greater number of dances, movements, and exercises that she herself had taught and of which she had the truest living memory. Recognizing that uniting all these strands was now her unavoidable role, she devoted all her energy to this task, traveling indefatigably between Europe and America. I would meet her often and was always fascinated by the same observation. Wherever she went, she seemed always in the same place, her stability unaffected by outer change.

One day, I asked Madame de Salzmann a question that gnawed at me constantly, for it was connected to all my major decisions in life. On the surface, all seemed balanced and harmonious, and I certainly had no right to complain. But, deep down, nothing could quench a sense of meaninglessness, both in my own activities and in the world around me—yet to solve this by breaking away or dropping out seemed arrogant and futile. It was a personal version of the ancient dilemma of determining what belongs to Caesar and what truly belongs to that “something else.” “I have an inner search that I cherish and respect but also a work in life for which I am grateful and cannot despise. Both seem valuable, but in different ways,” I said. “What can help me to assess how much I should legitimately give to each, so as to maintain a balance?” She looked at me for a moment, then answered quite simply, “Come back at nine o'clock tonight.” When I returned, to my bewilderment it was not to resume our conversation but to find myself included with others in a session that she guided, leading step by step to a complete silence.

I had expected something to be said that would clarify my question; only as time went by did I see how precise and practical her seemingly indirect answer had been. It was the answer of direct experience. It became clear that it is the quality of silent wakefulness, informing and uniting the organism from moment to moment, that gives meaning to each choice and to every action. On an ordinary level of awareness, all choices will suffer from one's lack of true vision, and as I had so often painfully experienced, we torture ourselves with decisions that in fact we are in no position to take. The purer the inner state, the clearer the vision. That evening she led us step by step to taste what that state might be and how in it contradictions can be resolved and priorities become real. In a cruder state, all arguments are valid because all choices are the same. The enigma is how to discover what can lead us to another, deeper, truer state. I still believed that somehow or other I could fabricate this state for myself, and I had to face the awkward truth that even this natural desire can become the greatest of obstacles; even the sincerest of wishes can block that special opening toward which all aspiration tends. Effort only has a place if it leads to a mystery called noneffort, and then if for a short instant one's perception is transformed, this is an act of grace. Although grace cannot be attained, it may sometimes be granted. One has to let go of the leaf to which one is clinging, but it takes no more than another leaf to blow by for one to drop again into the usual state of confusion.

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William & Louise Welch

Bio-Sketches

by Patty Welch Llosa

William J. Welch, M.D.

Like many of his contemporaries around Gurdjieff in the 1940's, William J. Welch was a very well-rounded man. Born in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, on September 12, 1911, he broke away from the middle west when he went to Yale University, and (in his words) "never looked back." After Yale he came to New York in 1933. It was a city he loved all his life for its bustling energy and stimulating diversity of people, and his first job was as go-fer for Chet Bowles and Bill Benton at the Benton & Bowles advertising agency, where he soon became the bright young executive that everyone knew would go far.

One Saturday morning in 1934 he walked by the office of young Louise Michel, and because she had "the best looking legs at Benton & Bowles," he asked her out to lunch. Thus a sixty-odd year romance began, and thus he connected first with the New York group that had been started by [A. R. Orage](#), a mentor and substitute father of the orphaned Louise, and later with Orage's master, G. I. Gurdjieff, when he next came to New York.

This marked a turning point in his life. As he said in his autobiography, [What Happened In Between: A Doctor's Story](#) (Braziller, New York, 1972), "a small worm continued to gnaw away at my self-esteem. It seemed increasingly shameful to know so little and pretend so much. I have long since come to the recognition that at bottom a man never really knows anything, but it seemed to me then that it would be a good thing to know something, to be in possession of a body of knowledge from which one met the world rather than always to be forced to improvise and never to have any inner discipline that was one's own. I decided to study medicine." He had very little money but a secret benefactor stepped forward to get him a scholarship at Columbia College of Physicians & Surgeons. He went there after a year spent at Columbia boning up on science courses which the "gentleman scholar" at Yale had largely ignored.

Welch waited to marry Louise until 1941, when he had almost finished his medical studies, though he had already become a father figure to her two children, Patty and Dick. As war broke out he became a

lieutenant and then captain in the Army Medical Corps, and participated in a seminal study of treatment of malaria at Goldwater Memorial Hospital. After the war, he went on to practice medicine as an internist and cardiologist, first at Princeton, where he shared a house with the legendary dean of Princeton University, Christian Gauss; then in New York City as physician for such distinguished people as J. Robert Oppenheimer, Ben Shahn, Benny Goodman and Mayor Robert F. Wagner. He was president of the New York Heart Association from 1967–1969. He also wrote syndicated newspaper columns (“Dr. Welch Says”) and conducted a call-in radio show (“Ask Dr. Welch”).

In his private life he was attending lectures by [P. D. Ouspensky](#) during the war and was one of a small circle around Gurdjieff when he came to New York in fall of 1948 and winter of 1949. When Gurdjieff became ill in Paris in the summer of 1949, Welch was in constant contact with the doctors attending him, suggesting medicines and treatment, and when the illness became ominous in October, suggested trying a new medicine which he offered to send them. But Gurdjieff responded that he should come himself to administer it, so after an incredible one-day preparation in which he managed to get the medicine, a plane ticket and a new passport, he flew to Paris, his first trip abroad.

Gurdjieff greeted him with his usual expansive: “Ah, dock-tor, bravo America!,” but Welch saw how serious his condition was and immediately told him in the commanding voice of a doctor accustomed to make such decisions: “You should be in the hospital!” To the astonishment of those gathered around him, including his closest students and several of his doctors, Gurdjieff accepted at once, and they went together in an ambulance to the American Hospital of Paris, where Welch attended him until Gurdjieff died a few days later. He also wrote about Gurdjieff in his autobiography, “Gurdjieff remained as a light over my shoulder, with his questioning insight and his devilish way of throwing into focus the noise and fury of an upside-down world.”

Bill and Louise Welch were part of the original group of some twenty people who bought the [Gurdjieff Foundation](#) building in New York City, and took an active part in groups, special presentations of the Gurdjieff ideas, and intensive weeks of study for many years. Along with [Olga](#) and [Thomas de Hartmann](#), they introduced the Gurdjieff teaching to Canada in the early 1950’s and have left flourishing groups in Toronto and Halifax. Welch continued to follow Gurdjieff’s teaching until his own death and had a profound influence on an ever-widening group of people who wished to follow the ancient dictum “know thyself.” He was president of the New York Gurdjieff Foundation from 1984 to his death in July of 1997.

Louise Michel Blinken Welch

When Mother died on Christmas day last year, a whole era died with her, not only for me as her daughter, but for everyone close to her—her family; occupants of the house she lived in where she was the uncontested heart for so many years; close friends and students of the Gurdjieff teaching, whom she helped to a better understanding of themselves or encouraged to develop sides of themselves scarcely guessed at by anyone; and other lives she touched obliquely or only once or twice. Wherever she touched, she gave.



Yes, she was a giver. Whether it was attention, love, soul food, a warm blanket or a delicious dinner you needed, she found what it was and then provided it or a rich alternative. She deepened our deepest questions and helped us see new aspects and dimensions in them and in ourselves. Whatever our need she focused on how to provide what was necessary or help us find it for ourselves.

She gave us so much in addition to mothering, hugging away bad dreams, firmly chiding to call out the best in us. She even tried to teach me cooking—and she was an expert who could turn even wartime shortages into an infinite variety of pasta or potato dishes. I have long regretted that I resisted her efforts because she was too good a cook and, feeling I could never match her talent, decided not to try.

It is amazing that she had so much love to give, considering that she received so little as a child. Born in New York of Ukrainian immigrant parents in 1905, she was taken in reluctantly by her grandparents when her mother died soon after. They told her they were her parents and left her largely alone, though she was visited infrequently by her father, who was introduced to her as an uncle, until he died when she was ten. Deceit and half-truths were hidden in every family relationship, and her happiest childhood memories were from outside the home; of school and Saturdays in Fairmont Park, at the public library or in the peanut gallery at concerts of the famed Philadelphia Philharmonic.

Forced to leave school at twelve and work wrapping parcels in the basement of Strawbridge & Clothier, a large department store, in order to bring home money for the family, she became seriously anemic. Luckily she was cared for by a friendly doctor who insisted she was not well enough to return to work, and sent her back to school. She told me only a few years ago that the day he told her this was the happiest day of her life.

In Mother's early teens a psychologist took an interest in her exceptional intelligence, conducted experiments with her and even asked to adopt her, but by then Mother had had enough of pseudo-parents and refused outright to belong to someone else. Although this woman arranged a full scholarship for Mother at Alfred University, she turned against her in the middle of Mother's senior year, giving her no choice but to leave college with only \$17 in her pocket and head for the nearest big town to find a job.

Never a complainer, Mother rose to yet another occasion that could have induced feelings of helplessness, discouragement and distrust in a lesser soul. The next day she walked into the offices of the *Rochester Democrat* and explained her desperate need of a job to a kind older man who turned out to be

the managing editor. He admired her courage. He gave her a shot at cub reporting in the newspaper's morgue where she wrote obituaries day after day until her lucky break came. When a fire broke out in a downtown building and there was no reporter immediately available to cover it, she was sent to do the job and from then on was a part of the reporting staff.

Always a quick learner, she was hired a few years later by the *New York American*, becoming in her early twenties both fashion editor and "Mother Manhattan," who provided advice to the lovelorn. (Wrote Walter Winchell in his column: "Louise Michel has gone from bad to Hearst!")

In those exciting years of the late 1920s she thrived among New York's intellectual elite and met her journalist first husband on the upper deck of an open-top Fifth Avenue bus on the way to a lecture by A. R. Orage, the well-known English editor. Orage became a father figure to her and introduced her to the teachings of G. I. Gurdjieff.

Abandoned by her first husband a few years later during the depression, she had two young children to raise and began writing advertising copy for Benton & Bowles in 1934. There she met William J. Welch, an up-and-coming adman, but held off marrying him for seven years, not wanting a family of three to burden his career shift when he decided to chuck advertising and go to medical school.

In 1936, Mother was appointed director of the writers' project of the Work Project Administration for the state of Connecticut. When she moved to New York with her new husband in 1941, she continued to write books and articles, but her deepest interest was now focused on the Gurdjieff teaching. She attended P. D. Ouspensky's lectures in New York and later took active part in Mme Ouspensky's work at Franklin Farms, in Mendham, New Jersey. After Gurdjieff's death in 1949, Mother became one of the leading figures in the newly established Gurdjieff Foundation of New York City and later assisted the founding of similar institutions in Toronto and Halifax. In 1982, feeling that Orage had never received the recognition he was due as the principal disseminator of the Gurdjieff teaching in the United States, she wrote a vivid account of those years called [*Orage with Gurdjieff in America*](#), (Routledge & Kegan Paul) which has been translated into French.

Louise Welch died peacefully in her 95th year with her family gathered around her, as gentle and loving in dying as she was in life. As David Young said at her funeral, "Mrs. Welch had a large family ... each one of us felt we had a special place in her heart."

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Photo of Louise Welch © 1985 Martha Henrickson

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For Dr. William J. Welch

Eulogy

by Roger Lipsey

Eulogies are not written in tranquillity. They are an urgent response to the often abrupt departure of one loved or admired. They need not be mendacious, and this one is not. The eulogy that follows was offered on July 12, 1997, at the kind invitation of Dr. Welch's family, at St. Thomas church in New York City. This version restores some biographical paragraphs passed over on the occasion itself. Those interested in knowing more of Dr. Welch will find no better place to look than in his own book, [What Happened In Between: A Doctor's Story](#).

“Bless your eyes,” he would often say at parting. I never quite knew what he meant, and perhaps you didn't either. That he became partially blind in the last several years didn't change a thing: eyes could still be blessed. I know that, as a doctor, he was not referring only to spiritual eyes, or some such—he was certainly blessing the very physical eyes of his friends and family, and the fragile bodies those eyes must guide. But as a man who almost unwillingly felt and acknowledged the sacred dimension of life, he was surely also blessing the mind and spirit that *see* and ensure for us something approaching a sound participation in life.

I say “something approaching a sound participation.” He would have understood that; he was not one to speak in absolutes or believe them. Everything was, as he often said, “more nearly” true, “more nearly” understood than before. Living for him was an *approach* to insight and love. The only absolute was the exercise of common decency, each toward the other and toward oneself.

Living for him was an unspeakable joy. Have we ever known anyone who so relished each event, large or small, each encounter with another?—and this despite, or perhaps because of an underlying skepticism and seriousness of mind that remained even in his laughter. He considered it an astonishing privilege to live, to think carefully about things, to be in touch with others. He never took life or his companions for granted.

This may explain in part why the journey to his apartment, for so many of us, was a pilgrimage; he was always fresh in front of us—or “very nearly.” Many here will remember their own occasions of pilgrimage. Some came in anguish; life is not easy. We left not lured from our sorrows or concerns, but more resolute, enriched in understanding, heard. “I have the ears of a lynx,” he would say—meaning that he heard the slightest sound. He also heard the sound of hearts, the sound of a thought barely formulated but seeking its way.

I don’t think he wanted to be viewed as a wise man, and I don’t think he viewed himself as an especially spiritual man. However, these things he was and they came about, one might say, as symptoms of the fever of his life. His calling, really, was truth-seeking—in medicine as in psychological and social experience. His calling was questioning. I remember a talk he gave years ago in which he didn’t actually assert a single thing: he simply questioned. Every statement was a question. At the time—I was young—this seemed astonishing, even suspect. Now I understand better.

What he couldn’t calculate, and had no need to, was the impact on himself and on those around him of his questioning. It probably remade him over the years. Simply by questioning and by attending to the answers that came of themselves or emerged in the course of unblinking inquiry, he became a wise man and a spiritual man. But there *was* something more: his feeling for people. It must have guided him into medicine in the first place; it certainly grew with the years as he looked after many thousands of patients. Dr. Welch had a capacity for unfeigned, immediate compassion: one experienced it at once when speaking with him of any real difficulty, be it medical or personal. He often railed at human self-preoccupation and described us, as Gurdjieff did, as lamentably unavailable to one another. This was somehow scoured out of him; perhaps his awareness of it was enough gradually to evict it. He had the rare attribute of welcoming people to be their best, didn’t invisibly compete. He was there for others, so fully that he almost shone with love at times. But some factor, perhaps good taste, certainly good sense, allowed him to feel much without becoming sentimental.

Gurdjieff. The great inflector of Dr. Welch’s life, the one who implicitly challenged him to be not just a superb doctor—already no small thing—but to explore human experience with wrenching honesty. Gurdjieff was the teacher whom he met in New York in the 1930s and loved ever after with the awe and delight of a son toward a difficult but astonishing father. It was this man, whom we can safely regard as a Western Zen master, who redefined for Dr. Welch—and many others of his generation—the full meaning of humanness and the possible scope of experience. Gurdjieff’s example and influence, falling on many different souls, bore fruit in many different ways. In Dr. Welch, is it saying too much, or saying falsely, to remember his enormous humanity, outsized really: more than one could hope for. Gurdjieff did not lead him to the heaven of the mystics—Dr. Welch thought earth to be heaven enough for now, if properly perceived and lived—but Gurdjieff did contribute in ways that can never be fully known to the emergence of rich humanity in his spiritual son. Gurdjieff said, if you work for your life you also work for your death. Dr. Welch worked for his life, and the lives of others.

Dr. Welch was born on September 12, 1911, in Eau Claire, Wisconsin—a town he described in his autobiography as having “one of everything.” In 1929, he graduated The Blake School, near Minneapolis, Minnesota, and attended Yale College, where he graduated in 1933. A loyal Yale man, in

later years he would reminisce about the monumentally wastrel existence he pursued there, but his brilliant use of language, thoughtful approach to medical and human fact, and lifelong love of the study of American and world history suggested that he had not spent his time quite so prodigally as alleged.

An initial position in advertising, with Benton & Bowles, left him unsatisfied and he quickly reoriented his career into medicine. He graduated the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University, in 1942, and completed his internship and a residency in cardiology at Bellevue Hospital in New York. From 1942 through 1946, he participated as a captain in the U.S. Army Medical Corps in a malaria research project under the direction of Dr. James Shannon, who later became director of the National Institutes of Health. In 1950 through 1955, he was in private practice in Princeton, New Jersey, where he and his wife Louise shared a home with the legendary dean of Princeton University, Christian Gauss; I understand that the two families would meet mainly in the common kitchen, where tacit but binding rules governed times for conversation and times for privacy. Returning to New York City, where he practiced privately from 1955 through 1981, he was affiliated with New York University Medical Center and Doctors' Hospital, and was Medical Director of the New York Cardiac Center in Yonkers. Many of us will recall our unspoken pride and involuntary feeling of personal safety during his tenure as president of what was then the New York Heart Association, in 1967 through 1969; that institution is now an affiliate of the American Heart Association. Until this year, Dr. Welch retained his rank at NYU as an Associate Professor of Clinical Medicine.

In the 1950s and '60s, Dr. Welch wrote a syndicated newspaper column called "Dr. Welch Says," on medical issues, and conducted a call-in radio show, "Ask Dr. Welch," again on medical issues. Always quick to appreciate those who know their trade well, he refined through these activities the lively style that adds to the pleasure of reading his 1972 autobiography, to which he gave the title *What Happened in Between: A Doctor's Story*. It might as well have been titled "The Education of William Welch," as its sustained clarity, verve, and flawless listening to the resources of language recall one of the great American autobiographies, *The Education of Henry Adams*.

Dr. Welch's private practice of medicine was paralleled by public practice—activities serving the larger community. Along this avenue of endeavor, he responded to a distinguished patient's invitation to provide the intellectual framework for the Emily Davie and Joseph S. Kornfeld Foundation, which focuses on medicine and human dignity, particularly in the closing phase of life. Dr. Welch was instrumental with Prof. John Fletcher, first and current holder of the Kornfeld Chair of Bioethics at the University of Virginia, in the founding of The Center for Biomedical Ethics at that university. Dr. Welch was also an active member of the advisory board to Howmedica, a division of Pfizer.

In later years, Dr. Welch took pleasure in his membership in The Century Association, a New York club where he annually exhibited the honorable results of his late-found avocation, oil painting. He also felt it a considerable achievement to have been invited to do the "voice over" for the celebrated film, *Places in the Heart*, directed by his friend Robert Benton. His membership in the Screen Actors Guild as a result of that venture struck him as a sign of successful retirement from medical practice.

From 1984 until his death, Dr. Welch was President of the [Gurdjieff Foundation](#) in New York City and advisor to affiliated Canadian organizations, the Society for Traditional Studies in Toronto and the Association for Experimental Studies in Halifax, both of which he co-founded with his wife [Louise](#). From the mid-1950s, Dr. Welch and his wife had a wide circle of friends of all ages with whom they shared their understanding of the Gurdjieff teaching.

Dr. Welch was a worldly man, contributing vigorously in many walks of life. But to which world, exactly, did he belong? To many, I would say. As a physician, he belonged closely and loyally to *this* world, the world of hearts and vessels, CAT scans and hope for the best. As a friend and advisor, he belonged also to *this* world, where our lives play out with their fair share of tragedy and comedy; he knew how to help. But surely in his most intimate being, which one heard at times in his words and felt in his attitude, he belonged also to another world, a spiritual world. He had not really anticipated this, I think; but he was honest enough to recognize good evidence and vulnerable enough to be moved by it. He would say on occasion to [Jeanne de Salzmann](#), Gurdjieff's successor and a woman he both respected and loved—he would say, “Madame, your secret is safe with me,” by which he meant that since he didn't really understand what she was saying, he could be trusted not to repeat it. But I suspect her secret was not so safe, after all; he understood quite well.

He was sometimes taken by surprise by the depth of his own feeling and vision. He and some friends of his conducted, in the basement of the townhouse we shared, what amounted to an 18th century Academy of Art. It met weekly among the water pipes and electrical conduit, none the worse for its setting. And for the most part, his own paintings were increasingly skilled exercises in traditional realistic oil painting. But once, working with the others to meet who knows what unusual challenge in a quick-drying medium, gouache or something of the kind, he permitted himself to paint a spontaneous vision: the vision of a landscape, balmy and expansive with a sparkling blue sky—and white stairs mysteriously mounting here and there, as if floating within or above the landscape. Looking at it while he cheerfully explained that he had no idea where the image came from, I realized at once that when the time came, he would know his way.

Dr. Welch, bless your eyes.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

A Remembrance of W. A. Nyland

In the Ear and Eye of the Beholder

by Terry Winter Owens

Willem A. Nyland, (Wim as he was called) was by profession a chemist and by avocation a gifted improvisational pianist. He was born in Holland in 1890, worked in Java in the earliest years of his career and then settled in New York in the 1920s. There he joined Orage's group.

Mr. Nyland met Gurdjieff for the first time when Gurdjieff came to New York in 1924. It was Nyland who chauffeured Gurdjieff to Chinatown on Saturday mornings and helped Gurdjieff select dinner ingredients. Nyland and his wife, the artist and illustrator Ilonka Karasz, went to the [Prieuré](#) at least several times (although the dates and lengths of stay are unknown to me) and he recounted one motor trip to Paris with Gurdjieff. Wim and Ilonka Nyland were the first of the New York group to go to Paris to see Mr. Gurdjieff at the end of the war. Both the Nylands became group leaders in New York and Trustees of the [Gurdjieff Foundation](#), although they did not conduct groups together as the other married couples of that generation did. Having worked under both of them, but to a much lesser extent with Ilonka, I can testify that their style of conducting groups and relating to their students was so different that never the twain would meet!

When I met Wim Nyland in the mid 1950s, the [Orage](#) "camp" and the [Ouspensky](#) "camp," having recently formed an alliance, had not yet synchronized their respective approaches to the Work. Over the years the distinctions between those two significantly divergent camps gradually blurred. While the differences may not be very obvious today, they were unmistakable in the 1950s and 60s. Because of the limited scope of this remembrance, I shall not explore the historical and philosophical etiology of the divergence between the two or how they were ultimately homogenized, but it is a subject worthy of deep examination. For now, suffice it to say that W. A. Nyland's role as a teacher of Gurdjieff's system of ideas was permeated with Oragean influences. Nyland considered Ouspensky a lesser light and off the mark in many areas.

With the passage of half a century since the death of Gurdjieff, it becomes increasingly obvious that there now flourish a number of divergent threads of the Work each with their own understanding. They might be compared to spokes radiating from a central hub—although it should be allowed that some spokes may have only the most remote connection to the center. Others might be connected but rusty, splintered and damaged beyond repair. Where does W. A. Nyland fit in? He himself felt supremely confident that his approach was authentic and precisely in accordance with Gurdjieff’s system of ideas. Having been so deeply influenced by him in my formative years, I am not in a position to have an objective evaluation.

Other than passing mention in a few memoirs, nothing of significance has been written about W. A. Nyland, although he had a profound impact on many people. One of the few published works about W. A. Nyland, Irmis Popov’s book, *Gurdjieff Group Work with Wilhem Nyland*,¹ is in my opinion not a significant source of information about Nyland’s approach to Work. It offers such a narrow slice of the pie that indeed no apple arrives on the business end of the fork! During the years covered in her book, Popov was in attendance only infrequently. When she did come, Nyland welcomed her as a “rara avis” a sobriquet emphasizing the long gaps between her appearances.

Focusing a lens on the past can produce a wildly distorted image. The subjectivity at the time the impressions were received combined with the unreliability of memory, a limited field of vision, fixation on the superficial, and a Pandora’s box of personal idiosyncrasies may skew the picture beyond recognition. Notwithstanding these perils, I have chosen to focus on what I remember and believe Nyland himself considered important: *his unrelenting imperative to work on oneself and to do so correctly and in accordance with an accurate representation of inner effort and its relationship to the ideas as a whole.*

Anecdotes about Mr. Nyland, like those about Gurdjieff, can be breath taking, enigmatic, funny, deeply moving and sometimes shocking. Anecdotes may appear to glitter with golden nuggets of the teaching. Without doubt, they have an undeniable appeal and sometimes are like pictures that are worth a thousand words. But for now I shall bypass the telling of anecdotes and focus instead on how Nyland taught, what he taught and what he stressed as essential. The mark of the man was neither his kindness nor his harshness, not his great intelligence and vast knowledge, and not necessarily in how any one of his students may have perceived his presence or his lack of it—but rather his dedication to the accurate presentation of Gurdjieff’s ideas and its practical application in daily life. He was critical, publicly vocal and sometimes strident about what he believed to be misstatements and misunderstandings on the part of his colleagues and would often devote entire lectures to such issues. He was neither a politician nor a diplomat but chose to “tell it like it was” at whatever cost. For example, when Work began to be described as a “new way of thinking,” he was dismayed and angry. He explained, at great length and with unassailable logic, that self-awareness was neither thought, feeling nor sensation but rather a new faculty of Being.

Clarity about the ideas, about correctly applied effort, about aim and the Wish to Work were fundamental themes that played a role in every conversation, every question and answer, every lecture. Nyland

insisted that his students know what the components of effort were, the “A-B-C of Work” as he called it, the three essential characteristics of self-awareness, the specifics of Do-Re-Mi of the first octave, how these concepts related to one another and to the cosmological framework of the ideas. Although he was a mystic and a religious man (but not necessarily church-going), he believed that the Work did not have to be discussed in vague, mystical language. He pooh-poohed the so-called “ineffable” nature of consciousness and instead he strived to define and express himself with appropriate words, images, metaphors and analogies. He rarely said nor implied “It cannot be said in words; It cannot be understood; It is essentially mysterious; We do not know; No one knows; We cannot know; We cannot do; We lie all the time.” Such expressions of essential unknowingness and incapability that cast the student in a perpetually exoteric posture were alien to Nyland’s way of working and to his manner of transmitting the ideas. He did not like the idea of stumbling in the dark to find the elusive key to a transcendental state. Rather he said that Gurdjieff explicitly gave us the necessary materials for actualizing consciousness and building a real I.

Mr. Nyland wanted us to learn how to fashion a key to consciousness and refashion it time and time again as our strength, our experience, our wish and our understanding grew, until it became a permanent, indestructible key. He did not minimize the difficulties and the obstacles, but he did not view them as impenetrable barriers. Nor did he allow his students to substitute a rote parroting of formulae and words for genuine effort—although many tried! More often than not, perhaps every time one of us spoke, he would unerringly zoom in on the weaknesses and flaws in their recounting of their efforts, not to humble the person, but to help them become clear about what was needed and to inspire them with greater wish. His answers were rarely brief. He liked to open a question into a broad perspective, sometimes far beyond one’s understanding. In responding to a simple everyday statement by a student, Nyland would recast it in the context of the eternal and the infinite. When a student admitted to being unable to work, Nyland would probe to determine whether the person knew *how* to work. He would repeat again and again and again what is involved in effort, what is meant by waking up and explained how wish could become materialized out of almost nothing. He said that there was more than sufficient material or energy in a thought or feeling or memory about Work to be translated into effort and suggested practical ways to self-produce a reminder to wake up.

Work was first, last and always about waking up, “To remember oneself always and everywhere” the ultimate goal. Digressions from that fundamental aim were not acceptable. Nyland never dismissed a question by ignoring it, no matter how foolish or irrelevant it might sound but would navigate the questioner into work territory. Personalized tasks to be conducted in everyday life were *de rigueur* and reporting on those tasks was supposed to be mandatory although some people evaded that responsibility. His repertoire of practical tasks was creative and voluminous.

Mr. Nyland’s group meetings (sometimes over an hour and half) were often in the form of lectures on particular themes or issues. They often dealt with how to Work and how to stimulate the Wish to Work, as well as with how to overcome obstacles or how to look at certain events in the world from a Gurdjieffian perspective—the assassination of John F. Kennedy for example, or the planetary alignment that set off waves of hysteria in people inside and outside of the Work.

At least several times a year, Nyland devoted entire meetings to the diagrams of the Work, some of which were at that time unpublished: the Diagram of Everything Living, the diagram of Jesus Christ, the Enneagram, The Ray of Creation and, to a lesser extent, the Table of Hydrogens. He showed how these diagrams were different ways of looking at the same phenomena—particularly how the Enneagram related to the Diagram of Everything Living, how these diagrams could be viewed from different levels and how they demonstrated the interaction of processes, substances and laws. For example, he drew elaborate analogies between the development of the fetus to the development of higher being bodies, showing intricate parallels in the digestion of the three being foods on different levels and how the centers interacted with the forces of Triammonia (an earlier word for Triamazikamno) in the movement of 1428571. Although these explanations could be extremely theoretical and difficult to follow, he would unfailingly relate them to practical Work, to the need to strive for greater and more exact effort, to the sounding of Do of first conscious shock, for the creation of impartial, objective self-awareness.

Notwithstanding the fact that lectures and writings of Orage and notes from other of Gurdjieff students make pointed reference to the value of saving energy by not expressing negative emotions, Mr. Nyland strongly promoted the point of view that the non-expression of negative emotions was an invention, or at least an exaggeration, of Ouspensky's. The subject came up often, perhaps because many people were attracted to the Work or remained connected to it because of their intense desire to get the better of their so called negative emotions. Nyland suggested that all emotions issuing from a sleeping state were of the same relative value. He explained that the material produced by strong emotional reactions was too coarse to be used for Work. The transformer, intentional effort, was the critical element rather than the saving or storing of energy. Better, he said, to observe the emotional reaction in the "playground" of the body and perhaps, were one awake and impartial enough, to intentionally participate in the outward manifestation—of course within the bounds of common sense. His examples were persuasive and were coupled with many practical approaches to work that did not involve self-manipulation or the violation of the principle of objective self-acceptance. He was concerned that one could suppress one's negative emotions and remain as dead-asleep and identified as a poker-faced card player. Along similar lines, he also criticized Ouspensky's description of the double arrow of divided attention and other concepts presented in *Fragments of an Unknown Teaching*. (The Nylands referred to Ouspensky's magnum opus as *Fragments*, its original working title, rather than the publisher's eventual title, *In Search of the Miraculous*).

In support of his disagreements with Ouspensky, Nyland would often cite passages from [*All and Everything*](#) and relate it to instruction he received directly from Gurdjieff and Orage. He urged everyone to read *All and Everything* at least three times, as directed by Gurdjieff, and then to keep reading it and studying it. He said that *All and Everything* was a road map for Work. His lectures and answers to questions made frequent reference to concepts, laws, events and characters from *All and Everything*. He discussed the metaphors in the tales as guidelines for inner work: the Teskooano on Mars, the state of Purgatory, the perils of early interference, the triadic relationship of Beelzebub, Hasein and Ahoon, the role of the Captain on the interplanetary spaceship, the reflections of the lights of Karatas, to cite a few. Unless one had studied the book, the significance of those references might be missed, but his passionate references to them inspired people to struggle with this difficult book. Nyland's insistence that Gurdjieff's writings were primary source material rather than Ouspensky's books and Nicoll's

Commentaries was reflected in his own intimate knowledge and continued reliance on [Beelzebub's Tales](#). Karatasian words, the native language of Beelzebub and his entourage, flowed musically from Nyland's tongue. Under his supervision and hands-on participation, his groups produced a concordance/glossary to *All and Everything*, lovingly referred to as *The Index*. It was a monumental project that occupied many of us for quite a number of years. It was done in the days before Xerox machines and word processors (even before electric typewriters!) and a great deal of hand, heart and mental labor and money went into it. Nyland told us that he proposed the idea of such a concordance/glossary to Gurdjieff and that Gurdjieff was very enthusiastic and urged Nyland to create it in time to be published along with the first edition of *Beelzebub's Tales*. In fact, it took many years to fulfill that wish of Mr. Gurdjieff. When *The Index* was finally completed, it was largely ignored outside of Mr. Nyland's own groups. The production of *The Index* is a story in itself that should one day be told!

Mr. Nyland conducted groups four or five nights a week the year round (no vacations from Work!)—and sometimes he invited us to luncheon at midday. On Friday evenings, he played music, improvising for hours on the piano in his own non-Gurdjieffian harmonic style. His music was offered and largely received as a non-verbal transmission of ideas and an aural current of his presence. People packed the room to hear it, week after month after year. Several 33 RPM records were pressed, with beautiful covers by Ilonka Karasz Nyland and liner notes by the photographer Paul Caponigro. Mr. Nyland gave me the task of bringing his recordings to the general public. My first stop was G. Schirmer, the most prestigious music shop in New York. As it turned out, very little salesmanship was required. The manager was captivated by the music and the cover art. Some of Nyland's records were sold at Schirmers for a few years.

The groups were also often invited to weekends and extended work periods at his country home in Brewster, New York. This magnificent house, originally only two rooms, was expanded as a work project by Orage's group and further enlarged with the efforts of Nyland's own groups in the 50s and 60s. There, his groups re-assembled and refurbished a pipe organ purchased from a nearby church. An enormous music room was built to house it. There, Nyland would play either the piano or the organ or a harmonium given to him by Gurdjieff. In the evenings, he would read aloud from the then unpublished Second and Third Series, somewhat different than the editions that were later published—at least to the best of my memory.

In 1965, Nyland issued *Firefly*,² a personal statement about the nature and aim of inner work. The manuscript was privately circulated among his students. The metaphor of the firefly was one of many breath-taking poetic images that he used in talking about work.

In the mid 1960s, Nyland began to distance himself and his groups from the activities of the Gurdjieff Foundation. Later, he established a center for his work in Warwick, New York which he called *Chardavogne Barn*, and which later became formally known as [The Institute for Religious Development](#). He also established groups in a number of cities across the country, many of which continue to this day.

Mr. Nyland died in 1975. It is difficult to assess the legacy of this man—only to hope that the clarity of

his teaching endures as a living force in many individuals.

Notes

¹ *Gurdjieff Group Work with Wilhem Nyland*. New York: Weiser; 1983, 72p., ISBN 0-87728-580-2. The book misspells Mr. Nyland's first name which is Willem, not Wilhem.

² *Firefly*. New York: Typed manuscript, 1965, 2 Volumes, 83p./113p.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Louise March

1900–1987

Mrs. March was born Louise Goepfert in Switzerland in 1900. She spent most of her childhood in Germany, and studied art history at Berlin University. After coming to the United States as a graduate exchange student in 1926, she did further study in art history at Smith College. Soon afterward, she joined the faculty of the art department at Hunter College in Manhattan.

During her first years in New York, she met the renowned photographer Alfred Stieglitz and the painter Georgia O’Keeffe (who would become a lifelong friend). With their help, she took a job as manager of the Opportunity Gallery in Manhattan, and became established within a circle of artists, writers, and society people in New York’s cultural scene.

One evening in early 1929, she was invited to the studios of Carnegie Hall, where G. I. Gurdjieff was hosting a recital of piano music composed with his pupil, [Thomas de Hartmann](#). Her encounter with Gurdjieff, followed by subsequent meetings during the weeks of his stay in New York, proved to be a turning point. By late spring, at Gurdjieff’s invitation, she traveled across the Atlantic to live and study at the [Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man](#) in Fontainebleau, France.

During this period, on a daily basis, Gurdjieff was immersed in the writing and revision of his seminal work, *All and Everything: [Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson](#)*. In addition to serving as his secretary, Miss Goepfert was given the task of translating Gurdjieff’s writings into German and preparing them for publication—roles she undertook with unflinching dedication and exactness.

Her close relationship with Gurdjieff would continue until his death in October, 1949. Not long afterwards, she wrote an essay which contains the following passage:

To me, as the only living German speaking disciple and translator of his writings into German, falls the task to point to Gurdjieff (even if only very inadequately) for all of my brothers who speak the same language.

After Gurdjieff closed the Chateau de Prieuré, Louise Goepfert remained in Europe. In 1933, she married

Walter March, a German architect she had met in New York several years earlier. The two settled in Berlin until 1936, when sensing the impending psychosis of war, they relocated to the United States. By 1939, the Marches had purchased property in Bloomingburg, New York, where they raised five children, operated a full-time working dairy farm, and maintained close contact with a small circle of Gurdjieff's American pupils.

In 1957, Mrs. March began to visit Rochester, New York, where a handful of people interested in the ideas of Gurdjieff had been gathering. Under her direction, the group solidified its aim to explore man's inner development, applying Gurdjieff's ideas with practical emphasis on craftmaking and physical work activities. This marked the beginnings of the [*Rochester Folk Art Guild*](#).

In 1967, Mrs. March and her pupils established a permanent home for the Guild at the 300-acre East Hill Farm in Middlesex, 45 miles south of Rochester in New York State's Finger Lakes Region. Disciplined work in crafts and agriculture became a way of life for community members, many of whom started their own families at the Farm. Residences, craft shops and a Movements hall were designed and built with Mrs. March's background in architecture and design a primary influence.

Mrs. March directed the activities of the Rochester Folk Art Guild and lived there until her death in 1987. Under her guidance the Guild grew to become a nationally recognized center for fine quality craftsmanship with work in museums, galleries and private collections throughout the United States and abroad. Now guided by a group of senior pupils, the Guild's unique combination of craft work, community life, and the study of Gurdjieff's teaching continues to attract people from all walks of life who are searching and questioning how to be truly human in today's world.



In Her Own Words

For those fortunate enough to know her as a teacher, Mrs. March emanated great magnetism, presence, and insight. She saw deeply into the human condition; and without question, she possessed what Gurdjieff called 'ableness'—even into her late eighties—to lead and inspire hundreds of people dedicated to a search for truth. It is worth sharing some of her statements that convey a measure of her individual qualities and of her transmission of Gurdjieff's teaching:

From Mrs. March's "Introduction to The Tibetan Book of the Dead, containing some suggestions as to the right reading of Beelzebub's Tales"

The first step is to 'learn to listen,' to wish to listen, to wish to drop the chaos in oneself in the same way that we drop the body at physical death. This step means that we won't interfere any longer, will not change anything (in the beginning not even ourselves); that we will not quarrel, that we have no opinion to insist upon; that we will not translate what we hear into our automatic daily language—which would be equal to letting it go out the other ear. This step means that one stays quietly apart from the million-fold army of

attacking thoughts and feelings and physical associations...

*Excerpts from an essay on Gurdjieff, written by Mrs. March in 1950,
translated from German by the author in 1984.*

Rather at the beginning of my work with him, while I was still amazed that Gurdjieff did not look for anything which constitutes the pleasures and strivings of all other men, he placed himself one day (when he was obviously tired) next to me after he returned from the café. We were on the terrace with the beautiful view of the garden at the Prieuré, where I was working on the translation of the first series of his writings. I asked him, 'Why don't you also work here with the view of the roses, the goldfish pond, and the trimmed rows of Sycamores, in such good air?' He replied, 'I always work in cafés, dance halls, and similar places where I see people, how they are; where I see those most drunk, most abnormal. Seeing them I can produce the impulse of love in me, and from that I write my books...'

Some chapters of the first series, especially the Chapter 'The Arousing of Thought,' called at first 'Warning,' he wrote and rewrote as many as twelve times. What an effort, until all the themes of his work (which doesn't leave out any question) were touched upon and woven together in this introduction. By the changes he made it was obvious he wanted to 'bury the bone deeper,' which meant not to give it in an easy way... He who recognized a person with a single look knew that this process entails a tremendous undertaking, and the first series had the aim to 'destroy mercilessly all of the century-old conceptions and images which are rooted in us about everything supposedly existing in the world,' so that space can be created to be ready to accept something new and real.

During the eight years of writing, Gurdjieff asked daily before or after a meal, in a small circle, or for many guests, that one or another chapter be read aloud in one or another language. He then watched the listeners and recognized the degree of perfection of what he had written anew, as well as the exactness of the translation. He often chose a chapter corresponding to the type of person, or more likely the chapter about the nation of those present. New guests were amazed that he considered a small word or the flow of a sentence so very important, but the translators knew Gurdjieff already as the *teacher of exactness*. For us, the translation wasn't done just for the sake of translation, but was our schooling which freed us from our subjective conceptions and views, and thanks to the creation of a new exact language brought us to an understanding which we could not even have imagined at the beginning...

Describing beginnings of the Rochester Folk Art Guild

I realized that one cannot only talk philosophy ... that one needs the whole man, so we started with the crafts.

Quotes from articles about the Guild

To work concentratedly and do something that speaks truly to another man is a miracle.

Developed man is beyond like or dislike. He serves such as he can with his small powers and short years on earth.

Every human being is a speck in the universe. This makes us more modest—on our knees and open to higher influences.

When one enlarges one's inner life, one finds an artist.

Certain qualities that should be characteristic of man may be lacking, such as awe, gratitude, reverence... I think the whole American culture is shy of feeling, afraid of feeling and afraid of suffering, which belongs to life. The moderns try to shut it out, and they suffer all the more.



From a talk on vision, given July 11, 1983

Vision is more than seeing. The two hang together. So we are like a tree standing in ourselves, and no one can help us except our own vision, our wishing to see. You can look backward to the beginning, from your birth on, through the different years of growing up and being in the middle of life. And you can turn to the other and now the second half, and know that it ends in death. The wish to make something with your life, to develop something that grows, that's alive, that's formed at the end is your goal. Your vision may see many mistakes you made, and that you're going to make again—or not, if you have learned from the uselessness of the mistakes. So there where you stand inside yourself, life goes on. You cannot turn back. But you can have a different view as to what you wish to do with the rest of your days.

Here with all the crafts, including agriculture, you can wish to get to a perfection, to know the laws and to express something more than your own self. It shouldn't be just an accident. It should be a vision: How large is the goblet or the cup. And these are reflections of yourself.

Doing this and many, many other things, we wake up a pathway in our brain: The most mysterious and misunderstood part of man is his brain. And every effort, physical and mental, rubs these fine strings to come on and wake. Sitting, right sitting, does it in an extreme. But besides that it needs work, the whole body, from toe to hair, every part.

We Are Blessed

Take a fish from water,
It is not a fish anymore.
Fish is part of water,
He can only be alive in his element.

Take air from a man,
He is not a man any longer.
Air is his element,
He is part of it.
We all take it in,
We all breathe it out.
It changes us,
We change it.

Where is mine or thine?
Where is greed or glory?
We search so far—it is so near.

When we meet it,
We shiver and bless it.
And we are blessed.

We are blessed to discover,
Something so good, so real,
Could be found in this life.

~ • ~

OH GREAT LORD: WHAT IS LIFE?
NOW IN MY EIGHTY FIFTH YEAR
I AM CLOSER TO THE LIFE IN ME
AND IT URGES ME, IN GRATITUDE
TO EXPAND THE LIFE
OF A ROSE OR AMARYLLIS—
OH OF ANY FLOWER OR PETAL
THAT REPRESENTS THEE.

Later Years

A friend, Roger Lipsey, writes of this period of her life:

In those later years I was one of many who encouraged her desire to write her autobiography. I waited patiently for the pages to pour forth. There was in fact a trickle from time to time, then silence. I would ask after the progress of the project. This caused rather long pauses in the conversation. Then one day, when I was again able to visit the Guild, she showed me her latest work: dried flowers and petals arranged in patterns, framed under glass—an entire roomful of them. Some were solemn mandalas, others pleasing designs. Still others hinted at who knows what intuitions of the Logos that orders all things. As a whole these were, it seemed, the autobiography I had hoped might be written in a more standard medium. They represent a wonderful “late period” of the artist/craftsperson she was—free and fearless, creative and earthy, symbolic and not symbolic at all.



I remember another of her projects in those years, her “indestructibles” as she called them. She somehow came up with the idea that if you carefully hollow out a gourd or squash and immerse it at length and repeatedly in fresh ashes, the hollow shell will shrink and harden into a durable, wood-like condition. It worked marvelously well. They are little masterpieces, furnishings for a fairy tale. It was clear that she appreciated the irony of calling these tough but tiny containers “indestructible.” She knew that nothing material is indestructible. But these little objects, and the immense care that went into producing them, must have kept her in mind of the general aim that concerned her—to find the truly indestructible in human nature. Gurdjieff spoke in his writings of “being-duty,” by which I believe he meant a persistent way of life that serves practical needs but also serves to develop the strengths and beauties of human nature. Louise March lived for that, and she shared what she understood of it with others.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Pamela Travers

1899–1996

It was fitting that Pamela Travers died on St. George's Day, 23 April, and that her funeral took place on May Day, both dates significant examples of myth and meaning, the profound study of which had been her great love for many years.

She made a point of being extremely reticent about her personal life, so there remains much uncertainty as to where and when she first met Mr. Gurdjieff, although it is thought to have been in Paris during the 1930s.

She spoke more freely about her friendship with [A. R. Orage](#) which developed when he published one of her poems in the *New Age*. She would speak with immense gratitude about the way he encouraged her in her writing, and inspired her in her search, already alive and strong since childhood and nurtured in early adulthood by George Russell (A. E.) and W. B. Yeats among others. She would often say, "If you want to know more, read *What the Bee Knows*,"—the book she wished most to be her epitaph. It contains all her major contributions over 20 years to *Parabola* magazine, and includes her remarkable lecture to the American Library of Congress in 1967 entitled "Only Connect," that phrase so loved by her, taken (or as she herself would say "stolen") from E. M. Forster's *Howard's End*.

It was her special skill in connecting or linking the pearls of spiritual tradition which was undoubtedly her greatest and perhaps her unique contribution to the activities of the [Gurdjieff] Society. She helped to set up and index the Society's library to include not only all Gurdjieff's books and those of [Ouspensky](#), [Nicoll](#), [Walker](#) and others pertaining to Gurdjieff's teaching, but also a comprehensive collection of major texts and works on Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Neo-Platonism, Gnosticism and so on.

Later, she arranged fine visual exhibitions on Islam and Buddhism, and, when encouraged by [Henri Tracol](#), she and Dorothy Maffett, activated by their own enthusiasm, gathered round them a number of study groups to share with them, each in their own inimitable fashion, their knowledge, understanding and love of all this material. Studies of the traditions continue in the Society to this day, thanks to the labours and inspiration of these two exceptional women, both of whom participated in these study groups

until almost the very end of their long lives. In Pamela's case a small group was meeting regularly to study Maurice Nicoll's *Living Time* until a few weeks before she died.

While studying Sufism in the early 1970s, Pamela and her study group presented a dramatised reading of *The Conference of the Birds*, but only when she was satisfied that enough years had been given to a shared study of *The Koran*, *the Hadith*, the historical life of the Prophet, as well as the works of al-Ghazzali, Rumi, ibn Arabi, al-Hallaj, the question of al-Khidr (the Islamic green man) and dul-Quarnein (Alexander the Great). This latter study raised and left open the fascinating question of the divergence between the Koranic view of this invading emperor and that held by Mr. Gurdjieff.

Even during the time she was living in the United States, she initiated at that distance, a study of Hinduism, apportioning different aspects to different individuals. When, much against her wishes, her students divided the ten volumes of the *Mahabharata* among themselves and embarked on a five-year study, she bowed to their wishes and sent richly learned missives across the Atlantic, encouraging papers to be written.

She taught that to study is to question, and to go on questioning, for ever if necessary. "Why," she once suddenly asked, "do you think King Solomon (or Siegfried for that matter) could understand the language of the beasts and the birds?" And would not stay for an answer.

She gave an ostrich egg to the Dean of the ecumenical Cathedral of St. John the Divine on the edge of Harlem in New York City. "Why?" he asked. "The ostrich is a forgetful mother," she replied, trusting implicitly, one feels, that somewhere among the 6000-strong congregation someone—and it need be only one—would take up the question and perhaps discover that ostrich eggs are hung above the alter in the Greek Orthodox Easter service as a reminder of our responsibilities towards the possibility of inner re-birth.

She searched, and drew others into her search for the original source of Hans Christian Andersen's Ugly Duckling which she had heard tell was ensconced somewhere in the many volumes of Rumi's *Mathnawi*. Twenty years later she found it and shared her effervescent joy over a glass of Armagnac.

In the 1960s, she was instrumental, with others, in shaping the long day in the children's area of the Guild at Bray. She produced a rocking chair and the complete works of Beatrix Potter, and would appear, suddenly, her old grey coat slung over her shoulders, with cherries sometimes dangling from her ears or bearing kites from a trip to Japan. She would sit with young mothers on the grass at the end of a summer's day, keeping the children occupied with a hunt for as many different leaves and flowers as they could possibly find. Or one might come upon her in the rocking chair, receiving in a regal way imaginary gifts from a long line of children, or turning a pile of paper plates into erratic Frisbees. Original in her whimsies, theatrical, magical, inspirational, her particular resonance is already missed by many of those mothers who are now grandmothers, and those children who are now parents themselves.

She had the habit of stuffing endless old envelopes and scraps of paper into any book she was reading.

Not long after she died, one of those scraps fell into my hands. In faint pencil she had written: “How to serve the work?” A questioner always. A questioner to the end ... or to her new beginning?

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Notable New Release

A Lively Oracle: a Centennial Celebration of P. L. Travers, Creator of Mary Poppins. Ellen Dooling Draper and Jenny Koralek, editors. New York: Larson Publications, 1999, 224p., index. Sixteen eloquent, informed and deeply appreciative tributes, not only about Travers' beloved Mary Poppins novels but also for her enduring contributions as a storyteller and myth-spinner. Includes three major articles by Travers. Her article, “The Fairy Tale as Teacher” evokes the awakening effect of fairy tales and examines *Beelzebub's Tales* as an exceptional example of their power. “Here is a fairy tale for our time, a piece of objective writing that we cannot read without in some sense experiencing it.”



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

George Mountford Adie

1901–1989

by Joseph Azize

I am going to tell you of a scene at the table with Mr. Gurdjieff. He sat down, we were all there together, he turned and asked me: “You understand what self-remembering means?” I answered him, I said: “Maybe I don’t understand.” “Ah!” said Mr. Gurdjieff, “Repeat so the others can hear.” I repeated, “Maybe I don’t understand.” He said: “From today, you are my brother.” I share that with you.

George Adie

I was present at his group in Newport Australia, when Mr. Adie said this. Hearing it, brought alive the importance of being open to the unending mystery of self-remembering, and, to an extent, the love Mr. Gurdjieff actualized. Looking back, I am also struck by Mr. Adie’s simple humility: that Mr. Gurdjieff had referred to him as his brother was disclosed quite impersonally with not a shade of vanity.

In a way, disclosure of Gurdjieff’s individual influence was Mr. Adie’s aim as a teacher. He said to me once that it is a law that the pupil cannot rise above the level of his teacher; he saw it, therefore, as his task to try to make Mr. Gurdjieff present to us as best he could.

George Adie was born in the United Kingdom, on 14 January 1901, and died in Sydney, Australia on 29 July 1989. The son of a furniture dealer, he had a typical middle class English upbringing. For example, he spoke of being taught to salute the British army while standing upright in his pram. His parents sent him to a boarding school where he used to spend a lot of time playing chess with his teachers. The family was, I think, Church of Scotland, and he had particularly fond recollections of the old Sabbaths, when people were generally quieter and kinder. The family were connected with some islands (I think the Shetlands), and he spoke in a sort of awe of the hard but extraordinary nature of the northern islands. He became (I believe) a stock broker, but gave this up for architecture. He was by all accounts an accomplished and innovative architect, having a keen sense of the living history and tradition of the art. The Mayfair firm he co-founded in England continues to bear his name.

During World War II he performed unpaid work for the army, designing barracks for soldiers and aides who had been moved from their homes. While keeping within the tight budgetary constraints, he designed dormitories which used the space economically, but allowed each man some privacy, especially while asleep. His approach was to arrange certain objects which were needed (such as tables and cupboards) between the beds rather than, as was customary, in banks at the end of the room. He had worked intensely at the job, motivated by an impulse of philanthropy, and was touched by the gratitude which some of the men had expressed.

Throughout his life he had a knack for polarizing acquaintances. Mr. Gurdjieff told him that, if he wished, he could be of considerable help to others, but his unconscious manifestations often offended. Mr. Adie mentioned this several times and I know that he continued to work on himself in this area. When he did unintentionally give offence, he was increasingly conscious of it, and quick to repair it. In the latter years of his life, I never saw him aloof, dismissive, or arrogant. In 1988, when answering a direct question of Mr. Adie's, I found myself having to comment about one of his manifestations in a way that would have offended anyone else's pride. But he acknowledged it as true, and in that moment digested and transformed the observation. That experience is still as vivid as this morning's breakfast. I knew then that it would have been easier for me to dig up the Newport plateau with a shovel, and haul it away in a barrow, than to have not taken offence. Mr. Adie's self-observation and degree of inner acceptance surpassed simple perseverance. He demonstrated a humility, a willingness to see himself impartially, and a capacity to be merciless with his own weaknesses.

The kernel of this strength and responsibility must have been with him all his life. He made a great many close friends, and some of these relationships were so deep that "friend" is perhaps too colloquial a term. While in Cyprus he formed a deep bond with the local *muezzin*, a leonine old Turk with a heart of honey. While Mr. Adie sat collected in his mosque, the muezzin climbed the spiral staircase of the minaret, never taking his face from him. The force of that gaze, changing direction as he climbed the spiral, was dramatic. Years later, Mr. Adie received a report from the mosque that when the old muezzin was dying, he had sat up, called Mr. Adie's name in a loud voice that echoed throughout the mosque, and lay back down.

Few were indifferent to George Adie: most intensely liked or disliked him, or felt a mixture of these emotions. His depth of insight into others could be frightening. He sometimes imposed his 'helpfulness' on others and this would often provoke a resistance. We sometimes found it awkward to honestly tell him things which might embarrass us or offend him. But not telling him could itself cause misunderstanding. He was deeply perceptive, at times seemingly even clairvoyant and telepathic. He often knew when something was being hidden.

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As I review these few paragraphs I see how complex and unsatisfactory they are, with all sorts of qualifications: but how else can one report the history of such a relationship? He knew he had not "arrived"; he was still learning, still growing, still making more and more effort to be honest and sincere

with himself and others.

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Several of the stories Mr. Adie told about being with Mr. Gurdjieff reflected poorly on himself. A group of students were on a picnic, and Mr. Gurdjieff was returning to join them. Mr. Adie calculated where Mr. Gurdjieff was likely to sit, and took the place adjacent. Mr. Gurdjieff did sit exactly there—but with his back firmly to Mr. Adie. It was more than a demonstration of Gurdjieff’s extraordinary sensitivity to people: the shock Gurdjieff gave Mr. Adie helped him to see how part of him was manipulative and identified with his teacher. On another occasion, Mr. Adie was proposing a toast at the dinner table, when Mr. Gurdjieff interrupted with a pleased and excited expression on his face: “Stop! Stop! Once I was on a ship, and there was a preacher sermonizing—mow, mow, mow. All this time I forget, but now—he (pointing to Mr. Adie) remind me!”

Mr. Adie had many talents. As an amateur inventor his innovations made money only for others. When he was learning tennis, he saw an old pro serve an ace. Immediately, his body knew what to do, and from then on many of his serves were aces. It is difficult to convey the sense of unusual potential one received from him. Whether it was mimicry, expounding concepts, painting, reciting poetry, repairing a tool, or telling jokes he was exceptionally capable. Also, he had a delightful sense of humour. The soft-shoe shuffle he did to the Cole Porter standard “Miss Otis Regrets She’s Unable To Lunch Today” was one of the funniest things I’d seen. He could always break the table up into roars of laughter.

His second marriage, to the composer and pianist Helen Perkin, was a central feature of his life. It was a remarkable and powerful match. I have never seen another marriage where the partners so perfectly complemented and nurtured each other’s individuality. When they first came to his flat in 1948, Mr. Gurdjieff remarked, with surprise, that he had never seen such a pairing of different types, and had them seated where he could watch them. One incident, which expresses something of their marriage, occurred when a group of us were editing the transcript of a meeting with Mr. Adie. Over about fifteen pages, Mr. and Mrs. Adie had independently made exactly the same amendments, additions and alterations. And it wasn’t that they hazarded only a few minor alterations.



It was striking; without consultation and for page after page they had each thought the inner sense of the exchange demanded identical changes to make the transfer from the spoken to the written word.

Mr. Adie once told me: “Helen and I live by the Work.” It was, I think, the Work which completed their union.

He was once reading a few semi-poetical pieces he’d composed, all of which ended: “I am this, I am that, I am, Amen.” Someone asked him about that, and he replied that they indicated an experience of unity. “Do you not find,” he asked, “that sometimes you feel as if you are one with the person you love?” “Yes,” the questioner said, “I do.” “Then ordinary life gives you that,” he replied, “and we know it

through the grace of being present.”

His meeting with Mr. Gurdjieff was crucial. He and Helen had been pupils of [Ouspensky](#) for more than ten years, and he had spent many nights drinking and talking with him. After Ouspensky's death, however, no one was more alert to act on the advice of Mme Ouspensky to seek out Gurdjieff. After their first meeting with Gurdjieff, he urged others from the London group to go to Paris. He once said: “As we waited on the platform to go to Paris, Helen and I realized that we would have to work for Mr. Ouspensky.” This is a pregnant comment, including perhaps the idea that as former pupils of Ouspensky, they were still connected to him, bringing fruits of his efforts back to the source, and thus, even if in a small way, reuniting Ouspensky to his teacher. Mr. Adie also said: “When we finally met Mr. Gurdjieff, we saw that the alchemy we had spoken of with Mr. Ouspensky was actually taking place here.” From that point on, Mrs. Adie and he spent as much of their time with Mr. Gurdjieff as they could. On one occasion, Mr. Adie was even sent overseas on a personal task by Gurdjieff. He regarded Mr. Gurdjieff as his spiritual father.

He said that at their last meeting with Gurdjieff, who was then very ill, he motioned them over to his bed, and said, in a very low voice: “Angel help you, devil help you.”

After Mr. Gurdjieff's death, Mr. Adie continued as one of the leaders of the Gurdjieff Work in England. He was in [Madame Lannes'](#) Group One, which initially in 1950 comprised, in addition to George Adie, [J. G. Bennett](#), Alfred Etievan, [Jane Heap](#), Reginald Hoare, Cynthia Pearce, Basil Tilley, [Kenneth Walker](#), and Aubrey Wolton. However, in about 1966, a severe lung condition obliged him to move to the warmer climate of Sydney, Australia.

As a Teacher in the Gurdjieff Work

In Sydney, despite an illness which gave him no respite, Mr. Adie brought the direct influence of Gurdjieff to a group which, for the last ten years of his life, numbered between 80 and 100 persons. He always said that his invalidism was a wonderful reminding factor. It provided a constant opportunity for him to be mindful of his body and his breath. His mindfulness was palpable. This was clear, even if you approached him from behind. He would sometimes sit with his head slightly lowered while he gathered his breath and his thoughts, and then, when he looked up at you, he could manifest a rare power, with fine feeling, which could support and strengthen you, even when he was telling you something unpalatable about yourself.

George Adie worked intensely with and for his pupils—leaving many of his own projects undone—to help them in their inner search. Despite considerable urging to publish an autobiography, he never began it, because, as he said, once he started, it would distract him from his work with his people. It was characteristic that he arranged ‘weekend works’ where the entirety of one weekend would be spent on intense inner and group Work, developing a theme over two days, and working practically, but the next weekend would be left completely free for personal matters, rest and recreation.

One day at one of our groups, someone was berating themselves for all kinds of imagined but unpardonable sins. Mr. Adie said: “Mr. Gurdjieff was always warning about ‘bad’ conscience. He said once “*you are not tail of donkey, you are pupil of George Gurdjieff.*” “And” Mr. Adie added, looking at the person who had spoken “*you are a second generation pupil of Mr. Gurdjieff.*”

Jane Heap once said to Helen Adie: “I wish George wasn’t so *keen* on the Work.” Miss Heap’s eye unerringly picked this trait out. But there was no doubt of Mr. Adie’s devotion to the Work, and he realized that he had to do battle with himself, his identifications and self-righteousness.

Mr. Adie demonstrated a tremendous intelligence of feeling. He was particularly touched by the idea and the developing reality of brotherhood. I speak here both of brotherhood of those within the Work, and also of the bonds connecting sincere people in ordinary life in the larger world. He often spoke about the generations yet unborn—was it possible to be in a state where one could actually feel love for them? Could this feeling of myself in relation to them be an influence in my present Work?

We appreciated Mr. Adie’s fine intellectual discrimination. It seemed that he could spot any inaccuracy or infelicity in a formulation. No humbug or waffle ever passed him by. I once described a negative emotion I had been manifesting and said that it had been just too strong for me. “Actually,” he said, “it’s not so much that it was strong as that you were weak.” “Same thing,” I retorted. He was quite kind: “No, not really. It’s a question of emphasis. You put emphasis on its strength, when it should more practically be on your weakness. And that relates to your understanding. All negative emotion has its momentum, but if *you* are there, it stops.” An often repeated anecdote in our Newport group is about the Work weekend when, before lunch, someone said in a dismal voice: “Let us remember this chicken that died so that we could eat it.” Before the entire table could turn morose, Mr. Adie said: “Better to say that the chicken lived so we could feed.”

Mr. Adie was natural and sincere in his demeanour. There was nothing wooden, affected or stylized about him, whether he was in front of groups, or at a Work weekend. The overly serious ‘Work attitudes’ one sometimes sees were foreign to him. It was always a source of suffering for him to see an affectedly glum ‘Work face,’ gazing without inner presence and with a church-going deportment. Equally, he disliked sentimentality, overly familiar greetings, and manifestations of ‘oiliness.’ Someone spoke once of making an effort to be warm to the person they’d been working with. He replied that feeling could be demonstrated by our state, the more fully we were present to ourselves, and that would by itself affect how we spoke and acted. One did not have to summon artificial ‘warmth,’ and then turn and ‘beam upon’ our neighbour. I would say that he wanted us to have a sincere inner cheerfulness, and to sense that inside each other when we met. He preferred that sincerity to conventional expressions, lest they become formulaic and empty.

He was emphatically not a blind follower of anyone, not even Gurdjieff. His thought was individual, as all real thought must be. We were speaking once about Mr. Ouspensky, and he said that it was easy to judge O. too harshly. It could be, he said, that Mr. Gurdjieff had made a mistake in respect of O. (as he often called him). Although Mr. Gurdjieff was a master, he was fallible. This was not a case of taking

Ouspensky's side. He said once that considering all the criticisms Ouspensky had of Gurdjieff, he sometimes wondered why O. had not simply asked Gurdjieff about them.

I once told Mr. Adie that there was a passage from Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous* where Mr. Gurdjieff was quoted as saying something which I found most disheartening. Mr. Adie read the passage and then said: "No, it's not right to say that, just as it's recorded. Mr. Gurdjieff often said these things to reach one particular person on one occasion. Perhaps to stimulate them to see something they would otherwise miss. But if you then went back to him, you might learn that it was part of the truth but not all of it." When I looked at the question in detail, that seemed apt. I had taken something too absolutely. Since then, I've noticed how in his writings, Gurdjieff will sometimes say something in unequivocal terms, and then later qualify it. Mr. Adie was always willing to confront such matters, and decide on the basis of his own experience. It has taken time, but I understand now, from ideas planted by Mr. Adie, that Gurdjieff did not want disciples or followers; he only wanted pupils. One is reminded of Gurdjieff's aphorism, posted at the Prieuré, "If you have not by nature a critical mind your staying here is useless."

Another example of Mr. Adie's thinking and feeling was a phrase he used only rarely because of its deep value to him; it was the phrase "love the laws." He was speaking here of the laws of world creation and maintenance. He could apply the ideas in a way which made them practical. And as all our possibilities for becoming are under law, he came to love the laws, and to speak of this in simple and unaffected terms. He had flashes of what he called the "universal adoration offered up by nature," and, again, on the rare occasions he used this phrase it was animated, and he was humble.

In his last years, readings from [Beelzebub](#) were held three times each Work day. It might sound excessive, but in fact it was not. His regard for the book was based upon his experience of it. I can vividly recall him being moved to tears by passages in it. As Ouspensky once said to him, when he reported that a picture in the art gallery had moved him to tears: "Yes, you are crying type. I am swearing type."

One incident which remains with me relates to something he once said to me at the end of a Work weekend in the year that he died. It perplexed me, and I asked him about it a few weeks later. He was surprised and admitted that he'd forgotten the comment and its context. He could not recall what it might refer to. Then he said: "Sometimes, especially when I'm tired, I just say things. If I do, please Work for me. Take my age and health into account, and help me by your understanding."

When someone I loved had died suddenly, I telephoned him. He said to me: "No, nothing that has been created in the universe can ever be destroyed. He still exists. But perhaps he is passive. So there's a question: you are still connected to him, but what is he connected to in you—someone becoming more conscious or what?"

On another occasion I went to him with the greatest problem I've ever had. I had to write it down because I could not speak about it, even with him. He read my letter, looked up, full of life, and said: "You see how much you need the Work?" He turned my entire appreciation of the situation upside down.

I was so moved by his response and the sincerity of his acceptance that my ‘problem’ fell into perspective and became secondary.

Mr. Adie’s ill health was a perpetual struggle and required that he rely heavily on oxygen and medications but his strength of will and sensitivity to the needs of his body kept him alive far longer than doctors predicted. Characteristically, he retained full control of his faculties to the end, defying senility. His three final days were an unforgettably intense period for those of us gathered in his house. He exerted his force of will and struggled until he had achieved the state which corresponded to his wish. He remained there, in peace, for a short time, and then gently surrendered himself.

Thoughts on being with Mr. Adie

In reflecting on my time with Mr. Adie, I am drawn to ponder about the relation between teacher and pupil. I think there is a good deal in his formulation about his role as a pupil of Gurdjieff. Perhaps a pupil best conveys the influence of their teacher through the vehicle of the highest part of themselves. This would mean striving to be present to, and render passive elements of themselves which interfere with the purity of the transmission. Of course, a teacher cannot simply ape his or her master. The transmission is bound to be affected by the individual nature of the conduit. But the ideas and practices of Gurdjieff—properly utilized—make possible to some degree the neutralization of those factors which might alter the sense of the teaching. For this, the desire to mimic even Gurdjieff or his personality must be passive.

There is no doubt in my mind that there were elements in Mr. Adie which wanted to be treated as a master, something in him *identified* with Mr. Gurdjieff. It seems that we all are bound to be identified to some extent: but with what, how often, and to what degree? The unconscious desire to be ‘like’ one’s teacher is perhaps in lawful conformity with our ordinary psychology. This desire is probably another aspect of the impulse to copy the behavior and characteristics of others. In itself this impulse is not bad. Without it, much ordinary learning would be impossible. The danger is to not recognize this tendency and to identify with undesirable aspects of what we are copying, particularly those that appeal to our vanity. As I see it, this Work has a critical and characteristic danger, that the more the pupil attains, the more the temptation to see oneself as a teacher in one’s own right, the more danger of developing a ‘Messiah complex.’

This tendency may even be reinforced by the unique reciprocity and personal relationship which must exist in a teacher-pupil relationship. Mr. Adie said that after Movements classes, Mr. Gurdjieff had sometimes said to them: “Thank you for your Work.” Yet, who was Mr. Gurdjieff to thank others for their Work unless there was a personal element; unless their Work was to some extent for him, as well as for His Endlessness? In response to a question I asked him once, he said that Mr. Gurdjieff had been so warm that one simply could not compare his feeling with that manifested by anyone else he had ever met.

In a real teacher-pupil relationship, both can unite in their individual and mutual Work. It is perhaps an

application of the principle of unity. Something objective is one, wherever and whenever it manifests. Where the relationship between teacher and student is objective it is part of what Mrs. Staveley referred to as the divine plan for conscious development. As a pupil, I did at times experience the reality of the relationship itself. As a conscious reality, I trust it—I can trust the relationship. So all opinions of Mr. Adie, mine and everyone else's, are put into their proper place: they relate to an entirely lower level than the essentially eternal to which teacher and pupil aspire.

Regardless of his limitations, Mr. Adie passed on to us something which is incalculably precious. This is one of the mysteries of the transmission: despite our failings, the teaching can be passed on. If we faithfully apply and transmit it, the strength of the current will not be lost.

As a teacher, George Adie had the gift of being able to speak of his experiences in such a way that they could become factors in one's own inner life—it was as if the pupil directly benefited from Mr. Adie's own experience. He once described how he had performed some task for Mr. Gurdjieff, and found himself striding mightily along the street towards the apartment, elated about acquitting himself so handsomely. He suddenly noticed Mr. Gurdjieff on the other side of the street, and crossed over, smiling broadly. Mr. Gurdjieff, took him in at a glance and asked: "Young man, where is your feeling?" How many times have we, his pupils, heard this awakening question in ourselves?

So, this is the heart of the problem: in the matter of our lives, we must rely upon our own sincere decisions. In the end we are without guarantees, and no elder can give them to us. Just as Gurdjieff asked us not to be blind followers (although we need a teacher), so we cannot be blind companions (although we need fellows). Mr. Adie was fortunate in having someone like Mrs. Adie with him. Just as they were a great help and aide in each other's inner life, we pupils need to help each other.

There is some sense in which the reality we call "Work" itself is One, so that all moments of Work, wherever and by whomever, are connected. One evening after a Movements class, I said to Mr. Adie that it seemed that there were other presences there, the presences of those who had worked on these Movements before. He replied: "They are present—in their Work." And so it is with Mr. Adie, but perhaps only when we—his pupils—actualize this unique inner effort we call "Work." Could it be that in making conscious efforts, the pupil in some way continues the teacher's life?

~ • ~

[Joseph Azize met George Adie in 1981 and was his pupil until the latter's death in 1989. During Mr. Adie's life, Azize edited Adie's writings and talks. Now a solicitor, he has published articles on Law and on ancient history. Azize is a candidate for a doctorate on Religion in the Ancient Near East. He is presently working on pieces about Gilgamesh, as "the guardian of the order of nature" in Ancient Near Eastern art. Azize is also studying the "Books of Solomon," especially Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs in Canaanite and as interpreted by mediaeval Christian and Jewish writers. He recently established an internet bookshop (www.historybooks.com.au) specializing in ancient history and spirituality.]

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Dr. John Ritchie Lester

1919–1999

by David Kangas

The Fall of 1999 saw the passing of Dr. John R. Lester, and with his death we count one fewer who actually saw Gurdjieff with his own eyes, heard his voice with his own ears, sat at Gurdjieff's table. To members of a wide array of Gurdjieff work groups around the world, John was a trusted friend and mentor, a companion in the Work, a seeker in the truest sense.

A native of Australia, John was born on April 21, 1919 and went to England in 1939 to study medicine. His views and interests extended beyond those of the established medical orthodoxy of the time, and after completing his medical training he went on to qualify as an osteopath. His life was forever altered when he met [Jane Heap](#) and then Mr. Gurdjieff, who he visited in Paris with other members of Jane's London group after the war.

One story Dr. Lester related from his time with Gurdjieff is especially memorable. John asked Mr. Gurdjieff a question concerning an affirmation exercise. "He turned his full attention towards me, which, I can tell you, was considerable, and said 'Is more important that you say *I am*, than is that you breathe.'" Gurdjieff also implored John to "read my book." This was an indication which was taken seriously by Dr. Lester; for the remainder of his life he was an avid student of [All and Everything](#).

After Jane Heap's death John remained active in the work of the Gurdjieff Society in London, where he was a Council member and a Movements demonstrator. After his retirement from medical practice he moved to the US, joining his colleague from Jane's group, [Annie Lou Staveley](#), at Two Rivers Farm, the group she founded in Aurora, Oregon. John remained an active force at this work center despite an ongoing battle with leukemia. When he died at sunrise on September 29th, the Two Rivers Farm men's Movements class were working on "Ceremony for a Dead Dervish."

Because of his passionate interest in everyone and everything around him, he was a magnet—people of all types and persuasions were drawn to him. John was wholehearted—he never did anything half-way—but he was unconcerned with maintaining the status quo or establishing or exercising credentials,

though he certainly possessed more than his share of them. He was deeply concerned and troubled by the conditions of man's existence—the problems and responsibilities which we face now more than ever—but this concern was complimented and balanced by an extraordinary sense of humor.

Above all, Dr. Lester was a student of life, continually asking questions; never content with his own answers but always interested in the conclusions, perspectives and the Work of those around him. Through his own experience he understood what Jane Heap meant when she said that man is a self-evolving being—that Nature has brought us as far as she can on her own, and in order to fulfill his destiny, man must work, struggle to discover his true nature and to find his place in the cosmic plan. John persisted in this struggle, and, in this sense, served as an example and inspiration for us all.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Combining Good and Truth, Now

An Homage to Dr. Maurice Nicoll

by Bob Hunter

Maurice Nicoll's special contribution to the Fourth Way is that his teaching, by leavening the method transmitted by [P. D. Ouspensky](#), helps people to value the Work. Where Ouspensky presented truth precisely, Nicoll in a more relaxed manner showed how to see the good of it. For truth has meaning only when it is made part of one's understanding; that is, when it combines with the good, which includes its reason and "end." Emphasising Good's precedence over Truth, Nicoll maintained that if we were good we would not need truth.

In his Gospel studies, he equated the name Christ with Truth and Jesus with Good; and hinted at the significance in the united term's appearing only twice in the New Testament. Nicoll's full acceptance of Gurdjieff's assertion that the Work is esoteric Christianity does not suggest he was to any degree sanctimonious. On the contrary, he warned that anyone who affected a serious mien to appear to be a follower of the Fourth Way probably was far from it. He had a light touch, with people and in his writing, an approach partly explained by the Platonic saying artistically inscribed on a wall at one of his group houses: "Serious things can be understood through laughable things."

This inner lightness ruled out any thought of compulsion in his teaching, as shown for instance by his care never to say that people have no right to indulge in negative emotions, pointing out instead that they have a right not to be negative. Purification of the emotional centre was one of the main thrusts of Nicoll's teaching. He constantly illustrated ways in which negative emotions close the door to higher centres, which in turn hold the key to self-development.

Students accustomed to the rather rarified atmosphere of Work meeting rooms in the thirties and forties were at first startled to find Dr. Nicoll holding court in a village pub. Not everyone realised how much of themselves they revealed at these convivial occasions, although most eventually observed that their teacher was always "present" and that a casual remark might show them much about an attitude they

were displaying.

Dr. Nicoll could be starkly frank when circumstances demanded and his down-to-earth way of illustrating a message made it memorable. Such an occasion was when he drove home the idea that each essence is unique by telling a woman that, though she hoped to blossom into a rose, she was meant to grow into a blooming great poppy. At another time he had people rush about in a crowded room while carrying chairs with the legs sticking out. The resultant collisions etched in the mind the way that jagged points of our personalities catch against those of other people, for we see only the outer person instead of allowing for inner qualities.

He continually used this ability to evoke striking images to teach the Work. One of his suggestions was that people draw a map of their psychological country, to know where it was safe to move about interiorly. To help people separate from useless self-blame for wrong thinking, he described thoughts as birds and said people were responsible for them only if they trapped them in the birdcage of their minds, instead of letting them fly away.

Most people in the Work know of Nicoll through the energising thoughts expressed in his books. Henry Maurice Dunlop Nicoll, was born in Kelso, Scotland, in 1884, the son of a Free Church minister, the Rev. William Robertson Nicoll (later Sir William, after ill health forced him to give up the ministry and become a leading man of letters). Maurice spent his boyhood in Hampstead, London, took a first in Science at Caius College, Cambridge, qualified in medicine at Bart's Hospital, studied psychology under Freud then Jung and became a leading Harley Street consultant and Jungian analyst. He was a captain in the Royal Army Medical Corps in World War I, being in charge of a hospital in Gallipoli, an experience described in his memoirs of that period *In Mesopotamia* in 1917, in which year he also published *Dream Psychology*, his Jungian analysis of dreams and the unconscious.

He had a fulfilling career, but his life's aim changed when he heard Ouspensky lecture in London in 1921. After hearing Gurdjieff the next year he relinquished his medical consultancy and, accompanied by his wife, Catherine, and their baby daughter, joined the [Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man](#) in France. When, a year later, Gurdjieff indicated the Institute was closing, the Nicolls returned to Ouspensky's group. Ouspensky's centre of gravity may have seemed to be in his intellect, but with Nicoll he gave more expression to his feelings. It was said that Nicoll was the only person in the group who could make the master laugh, and he sometimes stayed with the Nicoll family at their country cottage. Despite this compatibility, in 1931 Ouspensky advised him, "Nicoll, you had better go away. Go away, and teach the system."

This he did for the rest of his life, supported by Mrs. Nicoll in a relationship that may well have inspired his comment: "A real marriage is when two people are working. It can be in essence. When he is asleep she must be awake. When she is asleep he must be awake."

Dr. Nicoll's most influential written works were not intended for publication, which he greeted with "humble amazement." The first volume of his invaluable [Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching](#)

[of G. I. Gurdjieff and P. D. Ouspensky](#), a collection of papers read to his groups, was printed as a matter of some urgency after he confided to senior pupils in 1948 that he would not live much longer and that Catherine should carry on the Work teaching. He survived long enough, however, for Volume Five of the *Commentaries* to carry a last, unfinished, paper dated August 20, 1953.

Volume One had been printed in 1949, the year when Gurdjieff announced it was time for the esoteric teaching to become more widely known. Publisher Vincent Stuart, one of Nicoll's pupils, suggested he also produce a book from the "Gospels chapters," and this appeared in 1950 as *The New Man*.

Vincent Stuart brought out Nicoll's classic, *Living Time*, in 1952. It had been written 23 years earlier, when publication of ideas relating to the Work system was banned. Beryl Pogson reveals in her biography *Maurice Nicoll: A Portrait*, that he undertook the book by collecting "all the thoughts about Time and Eternity that had come to him from Hermetic literature, from the Greeks, the neo-Platonists, from the mystics throughout the ages, and from Ouspensky whose Theory of Recurrence was not part of Gurdjieff's system."

It is natural that the idea of recurrence, bearing as it does on the vital question of death and the afterlife that confronts us all, should attract attention and perhaps stir debate among Nicoll's readers. He always made clear that identical recurrence was a mathematical idea of Ouspensky. As far as can be gleaned from his writing and from teaching in groups that follow his tradition, Nicoll accepted psychological recurrence as a reality and believed in what might be termed a form of reincarnation in which one's essence returns to visible life with the understanding it has made its own. Such spiritual persistence means that, even in physical recurrence, a person who has reached a higher level of being will be ready to relate to other people earlier than in previous existences.

This line of thought implies an eternal plan and an invisible guiding intelligence that assists the development of consciousness. Dr. Nicoll spoke of the universe as "infinite response," adding for those of us who may not find it so that it "is intelligent in so far as we are intelligent." To live intelligently requires sustained effort, but he pointed out that "the response is more than that we furnish to produce this response."

In 1952 Dr. Nicoll was still writing chapters for another book on the Gospels which was published posthumously as *The Mark*. He had previously told members of his group that the Greek word usually translated as "sin" originally meant to miss the mark, and thus was free of guilt associations; on his birthday in July he added: "You cannot have an aim without a mark ... the Mark is the Kingdom of Heaven."

Writing (in *Living Time*) for a public unfamiliar with Work terms, Nicoll said that, were our potential of consciousness raised so we could dwell in the now, each moment would be registered and we would leave "a trace of ourselves." Maurice Nicoll left more than a trace.

Notes

¹ *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of G. I. Gurdjieff and P. D. Ouspensky*. [3 Volumes]. London: Vincent Stuart, 1952, 1227p.; [Volume 4] London: Vincent Stuart, 1955, pp. 1235–1503; [Volume 5] London: Vincent Stuart, 1956, pp. 1513–1766; [Volume numbers were printed on spines and dust wrappers, not title pages]. Indexes to Vol. 1–3, 138p., and Vol. 4–5, 106p., were first privately issued in London with no dates. [5 Volume Set] London: Robinson & Watkins, 1972, 1973; London: Watkins, 1975; New York: Weiser, 197?; [6 Volume] paperback set with Vol. 6 as index, Boulder & London: Shambhala, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987; [6 Volume] hardcover set with Vol. 6 as index, York Beach, Maine: Weiser, 1996, ISBN 0-87728 910-7 (hc).

This multi-volume encyclopedic set contains hundreds of brief, sharply focused, penetrating essays and commentaries on a wide range of specific topics connected with the practice of the psychospiritual teaching presented by Gurdjieff and by Ouspensky. The first two volumes contain letters written to guide the author's groups when personal visits were interrupted by war conditions in Britain. He continued the practice of writing these epistle-essays to groups until his death in 1953. [ed.]

² *The New Man: An Interpretation of Some Parables and Miracles of Christ*. London: Stuart & Richard, 1950, 152p.; New York: Hermitage House, 1951; With a foreword by Jacob Needleman, Baltimore: Penguin, 1972, 184p.; London: Watkins, 1981; Utrecht: Eureka Editions, 1999.

A revolutionary exploration of the psychological power of Christ's parables, inspired by the insights and understanding of esoteric Christianity, derived by Nicoll from his practice as a psychiatrist and his work with Gurdjieff and Ouspensky. He demonstrates how scripture is designed to awaken us from sleep and presents the central ideas of temptation, righteousness, wisdom and prayer in this light. [ed.]

³ *Living Time and the Integration of the Life*. London: Vincent Stuart, 1952, 252p., index, bib.; New York: Hermitage House, 1952, 252p.; London: Watkins, 1976, 252p., ISBN 0-7224-0146-9 (pb); New York: Weiser, Boulder: Shambhala, 1984, ISBN 0-87773 286 8 (pb); Utrecht: Eureka Editions, 1998, 294p.

Nicoll abandoned his career as the premier Jungian psychiatrist in London to work with Gurdjieff in 1922–1923 at the Prieuré. In 1923, when Gurdjieff closed the Institute, Nicoll was invited to go to New York with A. R. Orage to teach “the System” as he referred to it but declined and never saw Gurdjieff again. In this exceptional book, he provides a glimpse beyond the two-dimensional temporal world of striving for goals in the illusory ‘future’ of time by drawing heavily on Hermetic and Christian traditions, Ouspensky's formulations of higher dimensions of space/time and states of consciousness, as well as his own practice of Gurdjieff's teaching. “*Our true future is our own growth in now, not in the tomorrow of passing time. Something must be brought into every moment, the cumulative effect of which is to create now. Now is not given. While living our ordinary life we must always be doing something else—internally.*” [ed.]

⁴ *Maurice Nicoll: A Portrait* by Beryl Pogson. New York: Nelson, 1961, 288 p. index; reissued in paperback by Fourth Way Books, New York, 1987, ISBN 0-936385-24-3.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Gurdjieff Heralds the Awakening of Consciousness Now

by James George

When I was growing up in the 1920s and '30s, when Gurdjieff was writing [All and Everything](#), the spiritual landscape in the West was sadly but aptly described by T. S. Eliot as a *Wasteland*. For most of us in that culture, God was “dead” even before Sartre proclaimed the demise, killed off by a reductionist scientific rationalism which thought all and everything could be explained without God. So the well of the meaning of human life was drying up. Space and time had lost their third dimension. We were spiritually bankrupt, and few noticed or cared. The land was not only waste; it was flat. There was no “higher” and the “eternal” had no root in our experience.

It has taken some of us fifty years to wake up to our common dilemma, and to see that what we most need is to reconnect with that which alone can give meaning to our lives. As E. M. Forester had said: “only connect!” It is easily said. But how? With what? For that, we needed real teachers and teachings.

And we got real teachers and teachings in abundance. Out of our deep unconscious unease, our incipient sense of need, the teachers appeared to complete the process of conscious awakening. There has never been a time when so many great souls and authentic esoteric practices became so generally available. The brutal Diaspora of the Tibetans has been only the most dramatic wave in the dissemination of the seeds of real being. And now the spreading is amplified by the electronic revolution of the Internet, for worse or for better. The spiritualization of the global village has begun. Suddenly, there are “rays to the sun” everywhere. One of these rays—the one that has meant the most to me—is the “Work” or teaching of Gurdjieff, as transmitted to me by [Madame Jeanne de Salzmann](#).

So, I must bear witness to what I have received from my teachers, even though the fruit of their sowing is far from ripe. I can only tell you how I see it now. (Do not take it as gospel. You have been warned.)

In the twentieth century, to reconnect humanity with its Source, Gurdjieff could not use the religious language of earlier times. If “God” is dead, the excessive cult of individuality in the West is still very much alive and could be used to open a channel of returning energy to our unknown Source. If we are

not any longer interested in God, then let us begin with what I *am* interested in: myself, I. For I may doubt everything else, but I cannot, in my direct experience, doubt my own existence. I know that I AM. And through that experience let me be brought to recognize the One whom Gurdjieff dared to call “our all-loving common father endlessness.” For when I am related with that Light, my little light can be a candle in the world. Only then can I “do.”

Yes, there is some risk in this “I AM” approach. I am already too habituated to taking everything egoistically. My wounded vanity does not readily forgive. My pretension to understand knows no limits. I can too easily assume that this “I AM” of Gurdjieff’s (or of the Bible) is all about *me* and my personal development. It may take years of inner work to come to the realization that this self-centered attitude of mine is the greatest barrier between me and the impersonal highest in me, which he calls “I.” And many more years to see that what I am *when I am* is not different from what you are *when you are*. It is not different from the Highest Presence; it is a drop of the same water as the Ocean. For that cosmic Ocean is indeed omnipresent, as is consciousness. Gurdjieff tells us in his Third Series that the difference between how I am when I am and God is “only” one of scale—and, of course, the scale is inconceivably vast. But the vibration that is the real I in me resonates with the same divine seed of life in you and (if I let it) with the Oceanic Consciousness. When, for a moment, I am truly present, I AM rings true on all levels. Then my physical body is the vehicle for a sensation of love that is not of this world, not of this planet. In *this* moment, I am present, no longer bound to the time of change and successiveness, from past to future. Here and now, I can receive a momentary taste of what always and everywhere IS—the changeless, the eternal *I AM*.

How ungrateful of me—*me* again!—to complain that such moments do not last! Perhaps, if humanity is both lucky and diligent, by the beginning of the next millennium human consciousness will have evolved a stage or two towards the state that a few pioneer heralds in our time have shown us is possible, and indeed our birthright. We are here for that evolution. How else could heaven and earth be connected? Heaven/man-woman/earth (as Taoist wisdom has been telling us for millennia) is the linkage. Gurdjieff calls it *Theomertmalogos*, conveying the same idea. Without some such permeable membrane how could life survive entropy and circulate both ways, through involution and evolution, in the cosmos and in us? Hermes Trismegistus put it succinctly: “As above, so below.” Today, we can hear that; for now our cultural landscape may still be largely a wasteland, but it is certainly no longer flat. We are beginning to “get it.” As Dr. David Suzuki recently put it, humanity is now somewhere between naked ape and superspecies. We are on the verge of seeing that the threat of ecological doom we face in this millennium could, if we receive it as a wake up call, be the threshold of a truly great spiritual renaissance. Because I AM, there is an above and a below in me. And in that immensity my ego “I” is ... nothing. Yet “I AM” in me *can*.

D. H. Lawrence felt this, in terms appropriate for the new millennium, when he wrote *The Song of a Man Who Has Come Through*:

Not I, not I, but the wind that blows through me!
A fine wind is blowing the new direction of Time.
If only I let it bear me, carry me, if only it carry me!

Fifty years after your death, I thank you, Mr. Gurdjieff, “herald of the coming good,” and all your helpers! May your fine wind carry humanity to our intended destination! But we also have our work to do: we must each, with our best attention, trim our own sails.

~ • ~

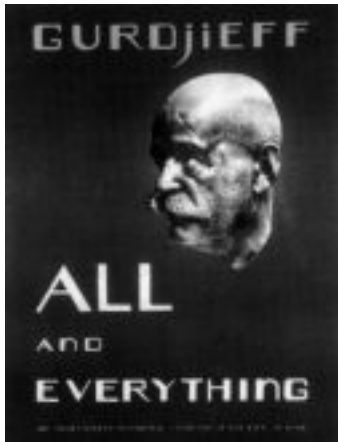
[James George is a former Canadian Ambassador to India, Iran & the Gulf States, Nepal and Sri Lanka. He has been a student of the Gurdjieff Work for fifty years and is the author of [*Asking for the Earth: Waking Up to the Spiritual/Ecological Crisis*](#), Element Books.]

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Beelzebub, a Master Stroke

Belzébuth, un coup de maître

by Manuel Rainoird

With the translation of a 1,094 page work into French, the opportunity to feast on a banquet of ideas has been laid before us.

Has George Gurdjieff, its author, invented the literature of shock? Everything in his *Beelzebub* convinces us he has. In any case, it owes nothing to other works. The range of tones, encompassing every nuance from the lyrical to the down-to-earth, the continual presence of vibrations issuing from a central focus, the avalanche of images, ideas, and made-up words that suggest to us nothing we could possibly already know—“six years of work, merciless toward myself and with almost continuously tense mentation”—have resulted in a monumental accomplishment.

And when one considers his literary mastery, so clearly displayed (the genres he calls into play leave our elegant efforts far behind), the fact that he has chosen to reach an audience through forms that are difficult of access leads us to suppose it is for some reason.

The stories die away. The nonsense dissolves. A great white silence, without even the cry of a magpie, reigns in the wake of this naked, unique advent, with no echo of anything second-hand. But this is only a respite. Like the transspace ship Karnak, this meteor, clothed in the perfume of other worlds, falls into our pond. And we frogs are struck dumb in our bewilderment....

[The complete text is available in the [printed copy](#) of this issue.]

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English translation by Martha Heyneman and June Loy

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Copyright Conventions in an Unconventional World

A Note about the Writings of Gurdjieff and his Circle

by Roger Lipsey

Some writers and editors who draw from the writings and recorded conversation of G. I. Gurdjieff and his pupils show signs of casual or willful disregard of copyright conventions. From one perspective, this concerns no one apart from copyright owners, who are free to pursue copyright violators if they so choose, and copyright violators, who are free to ignore copyright owners unless and until they are challenged. Yet this pattern of copyright violation is oddly notable. It has some element in it of self-portraiture, as if it offers an unintended but revealing reflection of features of the Gurdjieff community, broadly defined. Further, it brings to mind that book of obvious absurdities mentioned long ago by P. D. Ouspensky in [In Search of the Miraculous](#). As you may recall, it was a Russian children's book, showing drawings of ordinary scenes in which one or two elements were deliberately bizarre—for example, a cart with square wheels. We have here a cart with square wheels for our own generation: an immensely respected body of literature and documents, from which some fill their literary carts at will, apparently without concern for estates and ownerships whose rights are thereby infringed.

There are various short answers to the riddle of why these violations occur, none satisfactory on its own or sufficiently inclusive. For example, the ease of Web publication insulates those who publish on the Web from the procedures of book and magazine publishers, whose legal departments typically impose strict practice in copyright matters. Some Web participants are meticulous, others are not. But ease can't fully explain the disregard of copyright conventions, of which every writer and editor is at least generally aware and can always learn more. Securing written permission from copyright owners is an unfailingly tedious process, and for this reason some Web participants and authors in print may be lazy about it. While ease and laziness must explain something, they don't explain everything.

The Gurdjieff literary heritage consists not only in published works but also in unpublished archives in national, university, and private libraries. The copyright status of such documents is often ambiguous.

For example, unpublished reports by his pupils on meetings with Gurdjieff, which quote him as accurately as possible, may by the letter of the law—or through unintentional disregard—bear the copyright of a donor pupil or the library in which the archive is deposited. Similarly, unpublished and essentially verbatim stenographic records, requested by Gurdjieff himself as a record of certain meetings, may bear the copyright of a pupil or library. But one still wonders where ownership, by the light of conscience, actually lies. Thus, in some instances literal copyright registrations may fall short as a guide to writers and editors, and conscience may provide a truer guide.

This is not the end of complications. During Gurdjieff's lifetime and to this day, pupils have discreetly passed on to one another unpublished records of his teachings (and those of widely admired pupils). In his lifetime, such records were virtually all that existed because, as is well known, he published almost nothing and relied on some of his pupils, at the end of his life, to see to the publication of major works intended for the public. Written accounts of his talks and meetings were of immensely high value in the small community of seekers around him; perhaps oral transmission on its own was nearly unbearable, and some record had to be made. Somewhat similarly, Gurdjieff sponsored a trial mimeograph edition of his masterwork, [*Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*](#), which circulated among his pupils while Gurdjieff, as author, continued to revise the text toward the version eventually published in 1950. In an essentially oral tradition—until the publication of his major writings and of Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous*—written records of all kinds were rare, carefully preserved, and shared only with trusted fellow-seekers.

What all this means is that the Gurdjieff community, however broadly or narrowly defined, has an element of heritage that resembles the *samizdat* circulated among dissident writers and readers in the former Soviet Union: informally published, precious documents passing discreetly from hand to hand. This is hardly rigorous preparation for an encounter with conventional copyright law.

Followers of the Gurdjieff teaching, like followers of many other teachings, feel intimately addressed by the founder's writings and those of close pupils who met every test and became remarkable teachers in their own right. The writings are naturally experienced as the common property of all interested persons, a canon owned by all. They are consulted daily or weekly for private purposes; they are never all that far from the pupil's mind; and they are freely available whenever the pupil feels prompted to read in them.

It is not too difficult to pass from this admirable intimacy with the writings to an attitude of wishing to share them with others in the same spirit: free, available, unconstrained by externals. Reading and reflection are intimate acts. So too is writing—above all, about those things that matter most to the devoted pupil or follower. And so the trajectory of the octave imperceptibly but relentlessly bends around and around again, until the admirable intimacy of daily contact with the writings is converted into incautious lawlessness.

Gurdjieff warned against what he called mixing levels: each thing at its place, he advised, thereby enabling each to sustain its nature, to be perceived with clarity, and to relate to others most appropriately. By allowing an internal sense of ownership to govern where external recognition of copyright is needed,

some writers and editors mix levels.

Gurdjieff's writings, published and unpublished, and those of his leading pupils are marvels of inspiration. What relation do they have with the mundane routines of copyright—of letters composed and sent to publishers, inquiries to librarians, fees payable, thanks for fees waived and permissions extended? Can't we just get on with it? Can't we publish these inspiring texts and leave the world to the worldly? When one has such generous motives, when one addresses such high matters, is it truly required to plant one's feet on the earth of contractual relationships?

As one entertains these questions and the mix of indignation and realism they arouse, a slippery feeling comes over one, as if idealism has been overheard making a private bargain with the devil. It is true that the materials are grand, but bringing them to birth in an actual book or article in this actual world is a multifaceted discipline. The translators of the King James Version must have read galleys.

“Conscience matter,” say the Christian monastics, by which they mean issues to be resolved in the privacy of one's own heart and mind. The Gurdjieff written heritage has conscience matter, specifically the archival records of his meetings and table talk, little of it published. To whom does this belong? From whom, if anyone, must permission be sought to publish extracts from it? It is now well known that some of these archives are preserved in the Library of Congress, and to the best of my knowledge the Library holds the copyright and grants publication rights under a general policy covering many millions of documents of all types. Does it follow from this policy that writers and editors interested in the Gurdjieff teaching can extract from this archive without further ado?

I suppose that must be so—I haven't asked a copyright lawyer to confirm or deny. But it leaves me uneasy. Let us say that the voluminous letters you wrote to a famous friend are deposited in a public collection among that person's papers, and let us say that the authorities responsible for the collection, upon request, routinely grant permission to publish from these papers. Then a writer whom you do not even know, fascinated by this correspondence, decides to publish it without your knowledge or consent. Wouldn't this leave you uneasy?

It might be possible to test legally the copyright on Gurdjieff archives deposited in public or university collections among the papers of other figures, but I'm not at all sure who would want to do the testing, and I am quite sure that the process is unnecessary. Isn't it preferable to face toward one another? This heritage throws us together.

These copyright matters give rise to yet another element in an oblique self-portrait of the Gurdjieff community—by which I mean all, everywhere, who love the teaching enough to study it practically and make it part of the inner structure of their lives. We don't all like each other. And because we don't all like each other, the question comes up as to whether we need to communicate on any matter whatever, including copyright. Perhaps it's best just to let “those people” alone—whoever “those people” happen to be. Let them sink their own ships or pilot them to heaven; in any case, why seek contact, even of the most formal kind? On the other hand, is it sensible to create or prolong bad feelings between people

when good or at least neutral feelings can be cultivated? Good or neutral feelings leave one more in peace to pursue one's life and work, and surely that matters. Like Karapet of Tiflis, one can curse the whole damn town, but there may be other solutions.

Every stick has two ends, he said. The advantage of the copyright issue is that it throws us together. There really are formal copyrights. And there really are gray zones where, if copyright conventions do not satisfactorily govern, then something more powerful still may govern. This needs to be faced—but in doing so we stand to gain enormously because by facing the issues we discover each other.

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[Roger Lipsey served as an editorial manager for Triangle Editions from 1972 through 1999, and now consults with the organization on specific projects. Triangle Editions holds the copyright for G. I. Gurdjieff's published and unpublished writings and, with the cooperation of Gurdjieff's heirs, oversees their publication in many countries and languages worldwide.]

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Brother in Elysium: Orage in Gurdjieff's Service

by Paul Beekman Taylor

Reviewed by Michael Benham

Building on his previous book, *Shadows of Heaven: Gurdjieff and Toomer* ([Samuel Weiser](#), 1998), Taylor has utilised primary documents to reconstruct [Orage's](#) account of the crucial 1923–1931 period he spent “in Gurdjieff’s service.” He provides both a significant contribution to the historical record as well as a more balanced assessment of Orage and his contributions to Gurdjieff’s work than the literary biographers who considered Orage’s involvement with Gurdjieff an aberration. The book has been written with the cooperation of Orage’s descendants who allowed the author full access to the family’s private papers. These comprise the almost daily letters Orage and his future wife Jessie exchanged beginning in January 1924 during their periods apart and Jessie’s diary begun in 1924, supplemented by Orage’s personal correspondence with Gurdjieff, Jean Toomer and members of Orage’s American groups. Taylor acknowledges that the book is really their book “told in the words of Orage and Jessie” and modestly adds that he has simply “translated their words into book form and added complementary notes.” This is an understatement....

[The complete text is available in the [printed copy](#) of this issue.]

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

The Strange Cult of Gurdjieff

An Insider's Story of the Most Mysterious Religious Movement in the World

by Armagnac

What has usually been printed about Gurdjieff, who has tried to translate Eastern knowledge into Western psychology, has been highly fanciful and mostly tosh. *Practical Psychology Monthly* here presents an article, not by a journalist hastily writing up the impressions of a single interview with Gurdjieff, but by a student who for twelve years was a member of the cult¹ that attracted so much attention in Paris, London, Berlin and New York. The subject has never before been so thoroughly covered in a magazine article. [Editors of *Practical Psychology Monthly*]

Probably you have never heard of G. I. Gurdjieff. It's largely because the man shuns publicity. The newshawks have descended upon him from time to time; there have been stories in the New York newspapers and in the news-magazines. But the pickings have been scanty. There have been a few articles about his [Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man](#) when it was functioning at Fontainebleau, France, but they have been written by visitors who stayed there for only a very brief time. Recently a book² devoted to modern religious leaders carried a chapter about this enigmatic teacher of psychology, but this chapter like most that has been written about Gurdjieff is highly fanciful.

But if little has appeared in print about this man (or superman, as some of his followers think), much has been gossiped about him in the great capitol cities, Paris, London, New York and Chicago. The fantastic tales I have heard! Usually, without a speck of truth in them. But Gurdjieff is like that—a legendary figure. Many people have called him a charlatan; some think he is a hypnotist who exploits his followers; some, including very shrewd and highly intelligent persons, say frankly that he is the greatest man alive. To the present writer Gurdjieff is an enigma, a strange individual about whom it is impossible to make up one's mind.

The present writer has followed at firsthand Gurdjieff's career for twelve years. He belonged to the Gurdjieff groups in New York City. He spent one summer at Gurdjieff's chateau at Fontainebleau. He has read and re-read the big book written by this Caucasian Greek which is entitled [*The Tales of Beelzebub to His Grandson*](#). He has learned to do some of the sacred dances performed by pupils of Gurdjieff....

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Around the Theatre

The Voice of Moscow

November 21, 1914

[On the first few pages of *In Search of the Miraculous*, P. D. Ouspensky describes his return to Russia in November of 1914 and how, working as a journalist, he came across the following notice and put it in his newspaper that winter, shortly before his first meeting with Gurdjieff.

“One day in the office of the newspaper I found, while preparing for the next issue, a notice (in, I think, *The Voice of Moscow*) referring to the scenario of a ballet, “The Struggle of the Magicians,” which belonged, as it said, to a certain “Hindu.” The action of the ballet was to take place in India and give a complete picture of Oriental magic including fakir miracles, sacred dances, and so on. I did not like the excessively jaunty tone of the paragraph, but as Hindu writers of ballet scenarios were, to a certain extent, rare in Moscow, I cut it out and put it into my paper, with the slight addition that there would be everything in the ballet that cannot be found in real India but which travelers go there to see.”]

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The Hindu I. G. G. popular with Moscow collectors, has written a most curious ballet scenario called “The Struggle of the Magicians.” The scenario is based on an imaginary Eastern tale, full of whimsical transformations and mysterious phenomena from the other side of the world....

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Gurdjieff

International Review

Fall 2000 Issue, Vol. IV No. 1

Our eleventh issue continues our recognition of the 50th year since Gurdjieff's death in Paris on October 29, 1949. We focus on Gurdjieff himself, on his writings, and we also include several articles on prominent pupils. All back issues are available in their entirety as [printed copies](#).

[Editorial: Working with Others](#)

Anyone who wishes to engage in the practical study of Gurdjieff's teaching is likely to find the task of finding guidance to be a challenging exercise in discrimination.

[People Who Hunger and Thirst for Truth](#)

Gurdjieff discusses the obstacles and deceptions faced by anyone in search of inner truth and spiritual guidance. First published in *Views from the Real World: Early Talks of Gurdjieff*, pp. 50–51, 56–58, New York: Dutton, London: Routledge & Kegan.

[Excerpts from the Talks and Writings of G. I. Gurdjieff](#)

These excerpts on Art, Music and Movement were previously published as part of a program booklet issued for the "Ideas of Gurdjieff Conference" sponsored by the Far West Institute in San Rafael, California in November 1996 and are reproduced with their kind permission.

[The Old Man and the Children of the Age](#)



Gurdjieff arriving in New York, S.S.
Paris, January 13, 1924

This briefly is the state of things in the realm of self-knowledge: in order to do you must know; but to know you must find out how to know. We cannot find this out by ourselves.

G. I. Gurdjieff

You have to be two to make a poem. The one who speaks is the mother, the poem is the egg, and the one who listens is he who fertilizes the egg.

René Daumal

We all carry a question: Why am I living? In the substratum of everyone's being we all come to it, have to confront it.

[Sample Only]

An unusual convergence of literary merit and heartfelt experience, these essays by Pierre Schaeffer were first published in the anthology *Gurdjieff*, edited by Louis Pauwels in 1954.

These excerpts comprise a few jewels from a collection of articles that are often murky and misleading. Therein, Pauwels mixes his notions of the occult and politics to brew conspiracy theories. He casts Gurdjieff as “scandalous” and possibly (Pauwels is never sure) a Black Magician. The original French edition appeared in 1954 when it was virtually the only book available about Gurdjieff in that language. Pauwels later reconsidered and came to recognize that the Gurdjieff teaching was one of the most important and positive elements in his life.

Getting in Touch with Gurdjieff

[Sample Only]

First published in *The New York Times Magazine*, July 29, 1979, Margaret Croyden’s article provides a series of penetrating discussions about Gurdjieff with Jeanne de Salzmann, John Pentland, Michel de Salzmann, Henri Tracol and P. L. Travers.

A Conversation on Meetings with Remarkable Men

[Sample Only]

A deeply considered conversation between Roy Finch, John Pentland, and Lawrence Morris on the book *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, three years after its English publication; first published in *The Exacting Ear: The Story of Listener Sponsored Radio and an Anthology of Programs* edited by Eleanor McKinney, New York: Random House, 1966.

The Holy War

René Daumal’s prose-poem that heralds a fiery call to inner warfare is translated by D. M. Dooling from “La Guerre Sainte,” in Daumal’s collection, *Poésie Noire, Poésie Blanche*.

Experiencing the swings between moments of happiness and misery, questions appear.

William Segal

For me there are no answers, only questions, and I am grateful that the questions go on and on. I don’t look for an answer, because I don’t think there is one. I’m very glad to be the bearer of a question.

P. L. Travers

As for putting him [Gurdjieff] on a pedestal, especially after his death, that is the most sinister trick that well-meaning Gurdjieffians could possibly play on him. That is to show true disrespect.

Pierre Schaeffer

One of the most interesting things about the book [Meetings with Remarkable Men] is the passionate quality of this search—the fact that this man persists—keeps looking—keeps traveling, as it were. One has to regard it, I suppose, on that level, as a kind of a spiritual pilgrimage as well as a factual account.

Roy Finch

He [Christopher Fremantle] showed us in many practical

Commentary on “The Holy War”

[Sample Only]

Kathleen Rosenblatt’s commentary provides an exquisite setting for Daumal’s fierce prose-poem, “The Holy War.”

For William Segal (1904–2000)

William Segal, a long time student of Gurdjieff, died on May 16th of this year. David Appelbaum’s compact, articulate eulogy celebrates the multi-faceted life of William Segal as a philosopher, business-man, artist and spiritual teacher.

Wm. Segal

William Segal illuminates an exceptional array of topics, especially self-transformation, in this interview with Daniel Hess which was first published in the *Shambhala Sun*, November–December 1992.

In Light of Meaning An Interview with William Segal

[Sample Only]

In this 1995 interview, William Segal and David Appelbaum discuss uses of language and demonstrate that quality of attention and an inner presence are essential elements in the art of communication. First published in *Parabola*, Vol. XX, No. 3, New York, and is reprinted with their kind permission.

Christopher Fremantle (1906–1978)

This introduction to Christopher Fremantle by Lillian Firestone was first published in Fremantle’s posthumous *On Attention: talks, essays and letters to his pupils*. She describes Fremantle’s life and almost thirty years of work with pupils in America and Mexico.

Ouspensky

ways that the possibility of inner development lay in a more unified attention. When the attention is concentrated in a special way ... it connects our diverse selves to create a new state in which one may experience a meeting between one’s subjectivity and objective reality.

Lillian Firestone

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[Sample Only]

Christopher Fremantle—a former pupil of Peter Ouspensky—provides an informed synopsis of Ouspensky's importance as a philosopher and exponent of Gurdjieff's teaching.

A Theatre for Us

[Sample Only]

Orage adopts Gurdjieff's metaphor of the human psyche as a three-storied factory and proposes the idea of a three-storied stage set that would thus depict the basic facts of human psychology. First published in *The Little Review*, New York, Vol. X (2), Winter 1926.

Mr. Nyland and the Piano

Composer Terry Winter Owens describes what occurred when Willem Nyland asked her to go examine a Steinway grand piano that Timothy Leary had offered as a gift in the early 1960s.

Biblio-Trove: Treasures for the Mind and Spirit

J. Walter Driscoll offers books new and old but not just another book dealership. Specializing in Gurdjieff and stocking discoveries from his research for the next Gurdjieff bibliography, he offers all the nearly 100 books described in [*Gurdjieff: a Reading Guide*](#) as well as free searches and quality literature on diverse topics.



Gurdjieff International Review

People Who Hunger and Thirst for Truth

Views from the Real World: Early Talks of Gurdjieff

I have already said that there are people who hunger and thirst for truth. If they examine the problems of life and are sincere with themselves, they soon become convinced that it is not possible to live as they have lived and to be what they have been until now; that a way out of this situation is essential and that a man can develop his hidden capacities and powers only by cleaning his machine of the dirt that has clogged it in the course of his life. But in order to undertake this cleaning in a rational way, he has to see what needs to be cleaned, where and how; but to see this for himself is almost impossible. In order to see anything of this one has to look from the outside; and for this mutual help is necessary.

If you remember the example I gave of identification, you will see how blind a man is when he identifies with his moods, feelings and thoughts. But is our dependence on things only limited to what can be observed at first glance? These things are so much in relief that they cannot help catching the eye. You remember how we spoke about people's characters, roughly dividing them into good and bad? As a man gets to know himself, he continually finds new areas of his mechanicalness—let us call it automatism—domains where his will, his “I wish,” has no power, areas not subject to him, so confused and subtle that it impossible to find his way about in them without the help and the authoritative guidance of someone who knows.

This briefly is the state of things in the realm of self-knowledge: in order to do you must know; but to know you must find out how to know. We cannot find this out by ourselves.

Besides self-knowledge, there is another aspect of the search—self-development. Let us see how things stand there. It is clear that a man left to his own devices cannot wring out of his little finger the knowledge of how to develop and, still less, exactly what to develop in himself.

Gradually, by meeting people who are searching, by talking to them and by reading relevant books, a man becomes drawn into the sphere of questions concerning self-development.

But what may he meet here? First of all an abyss of the most unpardonable charlatanism, based entirely on the greed for making money by hoaxing gullible people who are seeking a way out of their spiritual impotence. But before a man learns to divide the wheat from the tares, a long time must elapse and perhaps the urge itself to find the truth will flicker and go out in him, or will become morbidly perverted and his blunted flair may lead him into such a labyrinth that the path out of it, figuratively speaking, will lead straight to the devil. If a man succeeds in getting out of this first swamp, he may fall into a new quagmire of pseudo-knowledge....

The more a man studies the obstacles and deceptions which lie in wait for him at every step in this realm, the more convinced he becomes that it is impossible to travel the path of self-development on the chance instructions of chance people, or the kind of information culled from reading and casual talk.

At the same time he gradually sees more clearly—first a feeble glimmer, then the clear light of truth which has illumined mankind throughout the ages. The beginnings of initiation are lost in the darkness of time, where the long chain of epochs unfolds. Great cultures and civilizations loom up, dimly arising from cults and mysteries, ever changing, disappearing and reappearing.

The Great Knowledge is handed on in succession from age to age, from people to people, from race to race. The great centers of initiation in India, Assyria, Egypt, Greece, illumine the world with a bright light. The revered names of the great initiates, the living bearers of the truth, are handed on reverently from generation to generation. Truth is fixed by means of symbolical writings and legends and is transmitted to the mass of people for preservation in the form of customs and ceremonies, in oral traditions, in memorials, in sacred art through the invisible quality in dance, music, sculpture and various rituals. It is communicated openly after a definite trial to those who seek it and is preserved by oral transmission in the chain of those who know. After a certain time has elapsed, the centers of initiation die out one after another, and the ancient knowledge departs through underground channels into the deep, hiding from the eyes of the seekers.

The bearers of this knowledge also hide, becoming unknown to those around them, but they do not cease to exist. From time to time separate streams break through to the surface, showing that somewhere deep down in the interior, even in our day, there flows the powerful ancient stream of true knowledge of being.

To break through to this stream, to find it—this is the task and the aim of the search; for, having found it, a man can entrust himself boldly to the way by which he intends to go; then there only remains “to know” in order “to be” and “to do.” On this way a man will not be entirely alone; at difficult moments he will receive support and guidance, for all who follow this way are connected by an uninterrupted chain.

Perhaps the only positive result of all wanderings in the winding paths and tracks of occult research will be that, if a man preserves the capacity for sound judgment and thought, he will evolve that special faculty of discrimination which can be called flair. He will discard the ways of psychopathy and error

and will persistently search for true ways. And here, as in self-knowledge, the principle which I have already quoted holds good: "In order to do, it is necessary to know; but in order to know, it is necessary to find out how to know."

To a man who is searching with all his being, with all his inner self, comes the unfailing conviction that to find out how to know in order to do is possible only by finding a guide with experience and knowledge, who will take on his spiritual guidance and become his teacher.

And it is here that a man's flair is more important than anywhere else. He chooses a guide for himself. It is of course an indispensable condition that he choose as a guide a man who knows, or else all meaning of choice is lost. Who can tell where a guide who does not know may lead a man?

Every seeker dreams of a guide who knows, dreams about him but seldom asks himself objectively and sincerely—is he worthy of being guided? Is he ready to follow the way?

Go out one clear starlit night to some open space and look up at the sky, at those millions of worlds over your head. Remember that perhaps on each of them swarm billions of beings, similar to you or perhaps superior to you in their organization. Look at the Milky Way. The earth cannot even be called a grain of sand in this infinity. It dissolves and vanishes, and with it, you. Where are you? And is what you want simply madness?

Before all these worlds ask yourself what are your aims and hopes, your intentions and means of fulfilling them, the demands that may be made upon you and your preparedness to meet them.

A long and difficult journey is before you; you are preparing for a strange and unknown land. The way is infinitely long. You do not know if rest will be possible on the way nor where it will be possible. You should be prepared for the worst. Take all the necessities for the journey with you.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

More Selected Excerpts from the Talks and Writings of G. I. Gurdjieff

Art, Music and Movement

YOU ARE RIGHT IN SAYING THAT THERE ARE MANY CONTRADICTIONARY OPINIONS on this subject. Does not that alone prove that people do not know the truth? Where truth is, there cannot be many different opinions. In antiquity that which is now called art served the aim of objective knowledge. And as we said a moment ago, speaking of dances, works of art represented an exposition and a record of the eternal laws of the structure of the universe. Those who devoted themselves to research and thus acquired a knowledge of important laws, embodied them in works of art, just as is done in books today.... This art did not pursue the aim either of “beauty” or of producing a likeness of something or somebody. For instance, an ancient statue created by such an artist is neither a copy of the form of a person nor the expression of a subjective sensation; it is either the expression of the laws of knowledge, in terms of the human body, or a means of objective transmission of a state of mind. The form and action, indeed the whole expression, is according to law.

VIEWS FROM THE REAL WORLD, pp. 32–33 [paperback]

TO DEFINE WHAT I CALL OBJECTIVE ART IS DIFFICULT first of all because you ascribe to subjective art the characteristics of objective art, and secondly because when you happen upon objective works of art you take them as being on the same level as subjective works of art.... In subjective art everything is accidental. The artist, as I have already said, does not create; with him “it creates itself.” This means that he is in the power of ideas, thoughts, and moods which he himself does not understand and over which he has no control whatever. They rule him and they express themselves in one form or another. And when they have accidentally taken this or that form, this form just as accidentally produces on man this or that action according to his mood, tastes, habits, the nature of the hypnosis under which he lives, and so on. There is nothing invariable; nothing is definite here. In objective art there is nothing indefinite.

“DO SUCH OBJECTIVE WORKS OF ART EXIST AT THE PRESENT DAY?” I asked.

“Of course they exist,” answered G. “The great Sphinx in Egypt is such a work of art, as well as some historically known works of architecture, certain statues of gods, and many other things. There are figures of gods and of various mythological beings that can be read like books, only not with the mind but with the emotions, provided they are sufficiently developed. In the course of our travels in Central Asia we found, in the desert at the foot of the Hindu Kush, a strange figure which we thought at first was some ancient god or devil. At first it produced upon us simply the impression of being a curiosity. But after a while we began to *feel* that this figure contained many things, a big, complete, and complex system of cosmology. And slowly, step by step, we began to decipher this system. It was in the body of the figure, in its legs, in its arms, in its head, in its eyes, in its ears; everywhere. In the whole statue there was nothing accidental, nothing without meaning. And gradually we understood the aim of the people who built this statue. We began to feel their thoughts, their feelings. Some of us thought that we saw their faces, heard their voices. At all events, we grasped the meaning of what they wanted to convey to us across thousands of years, and not only the meaning, but all the feelings and the emotions connected with it as well. That indeed was art!”

IN SEARCH OF THE MIRACULOUS, p. 27

BUT ANCIENT ART WAS NOT FOR LIKING. Everyone who read understood. Now, this purpose of art is entirely forgotten. For instance, take architecture. I saw some examples of architecture in Persia and Turkey—for instance, one building of two rooms. Everyone who entered these rooms, whether old or young, whether English or Persian, wept. This happened with people of different backgrounds and education. We continued this experiment for two or three weeks and observed everyone’s reactions. The result was always the same.

VIEWS FROM THE REAL WORLD, p. 184

THE KEYS TO ALL THE ANCIENT ARTS ARE LOST, were lost many centuries ago. And therefore there is no longer a sacred art embodying laws of the Great Knowledge, and so serving to influence the instincts of the multitude.

There are no creators today. The contemporary priests of art do not create but imitate. They run after beauty and likeness or what is called originality, without possessing even the necessary knowledge. Not knowing, and not being able to do anything, since they are groping in the dark, they are praised by the crowd, which places them on a pedestal. Sacred art vanished and left behind only the halo which surrounded its servants. All the current words about the divine spark, talent, genius, creation, sacred art, have no solid basis—they are anachronisms. What are these talents? We will talk about them on some suitable occasion.

Either the shoemaker’s craft must be called art, or all contemporary art must be called craft. In what way is a shoemaker sewing fashionable custom shoes of beautiful design inferior to an artist who pursues the aim of imitation or originality? With knowledge, the sewing of shoes may be sacred art too, but

without it, a priest of contemporary art is worse than a cobbler.

VIEWS FROM THE REAL WORLD, pp. 35–36

IN THE LEGEND OF ORPHEUS THERE ARE HINTS OF OBJECTIVE MUSIC, for Orpheus used to impart knowledge by music. Snake charmers' music in the East is an approach to objective music, of course very primitive. Very often it is simply one note which is long drawn out, rising and falling only very little; but in this single note "inner octaves" are going on all the time and melodies of "inner octaves" which are inaudible to the ears but felt by the emotional center. And the snake hears this music, or, more strictly speaking, he feels it, and he obeys it. The same music, only a little more complicated, and men would obey it.

IN SEARCH OF THE MIRACULOUS, p. 297

ON SUNDAYS, NAMELY, ON THE DAYS CONSECRATED TO MUSIC AND SINGING, the learned beings belonging to this group first produced on various sound-producing instruments, and also with their voices, every kind of what is called "melody" and then explained to all the other learned beings how they indicated in these works of theirs whatever they wished.

They also had it in view to implant these works of theirs in the customs of various peoples, calculating that these "melodies" they created, passing from generation to generation, would reach men of remote generations who, having deciphered them, would discover the knowledge put into them and that had already been attained on the Earth, and would also use it for the benefit of their ordinary existence.

BEELZEBUB'S TALES, p. 488

IMAGINE THAT IN STUDYING THE LAWS OF MOVEMENT of the celestial bodies, let us say the planets of the solar system, you have constructed a special mechanism for the representation and recording of these laws. In this mechanism every planet is represented by a sphere of appropriate size and is placed at a strictly determined distance from the central sphere, which stands for the sun. You set the mechanism in motion, and all the spheres begin to turn and move in definite paths, reproducing in a lifelike way the laws which govern their movements. This mechanism reminds you of your knowledge.

In the same way, in the rhythm of certain dances, in the precise movements and combinations of the dancers, certain laws are vividly recalled. Such dances are called sacred. During my journeys in the East, I often saw dances of this kind executed during the performance of sacred rites in some of the ancient temples. These ceremonies are inaccessible, and unknown to Europeans....

Such is the origin of the dances, their significance, in the distant past. I will ask you now, has anything in this branch of contemporary art been preserved that could recall, however remotely, its former great meaning and aim? What is to be found here but triviality?... Contemporary art as a whole has nothing in common with the ancient sacred art.

VIEWS FROM THE REAL WORLD, pp. 31–32

YOU SAW OUR MOVEMENTS AND DANCES. But all you saw was the outer form—beauty, technique. But I do not like the external side you see. For me, art is a means for harmonious development. In everything we do the underlying idea is to do what cannot be done automatically and without thought.

Ordinary gymnastics and dances are mechanical. If our aim is a harmonious development of man, then for us, dances and movements are a means of combining the mind and the feeling with movements of the body and manifesting them together. In all things, we have the aim to develop something which cannot be developed directly or mechanically—which interprets the whole man: mind, body and feeling.

VIEWS FROM THE REAL WORLD, p. 183

MANY YEARS PASS before these young future priestesses are allowed to dance in the temple, where only elderly and experienced priestesses may dance.

Everyone in the monastery knows the alphabet of these postures and when, in the evening in the main hall of the temple, the priestesses perform the dances indicated for the ritual of that day, the brethren may read in these dances one or another truth which men have placed there thousands of years before.

These dances correspond precisely to our books. Just as is now done on paper, so, once, certain information about long past events was recorded in dances and transmitted from century to century to people of subsequent generations. And these dances are called sacred.

MEETINGS WITH REMARKABLE MEN, pp. 162–163

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Gurdjieff

The Old Man and the Children of the Age

by Pierre Schaeffer

Every Time I Lose Sight of Myself

I go on long journeys. I am away for months at a time. In Scandinavian hotels, and in Pacific towns, on floating airfields, in the middle of African market places or Aztec churches, I sit as I have been told to sit. I try to discover peace in myself, and, knowing only too well that it is useless to look for it in my head, I try humbly to find it in the tranquility of the body, through the relaxation of my muscles. I sometimes succeed, especially if I do the exercise daily.

But if I neglect it, even for a few days, on the grounds that my general condition doesn't require it, or that my journeys, professional duties, social responsibilities or legitimate pleasures excuse it, then I go adrift at once. Meanwhile, they continue their meetings in Paris, that distant metropolis. They go on obstinately with the same thing when you would think they would be far better employed in some proved branch of instruction, or in going to Church. They had made me promise to force myself to "self-remember" for a quarter of an hour every day. I don't often manage it....

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Getting in Touch with Gurdjieff

by Margaret Croyden

This little known mystic from the Caucasus was a prime mover of today's self-awareness movement. Now a Peter Brook film will introduce Americans to his 'search for the miraculous.'

On a cold, rainy afternoon last January [1979], two thousand people crowded into Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall to celebrate the 101st birthday of the late G. I. Gurdjieff, the founder of a movement that—although little known—is a direct ancestor of the landmark human-potential and encounter movements of our own times. This birthday was a particularly special occasion, marked by the private showing of a new feature film, [Meetings with Remarkable Men](#), based on Gurdjieff's life, and scheduled to open in New York on August 5.

For the aging leaders of the movement, viewing the movie was an important emotional experience. But perhaps even more important was the existence of the film itself, a \$3 million enterprise conceived and directed by the British director Peter Brook and produced by Stuart Lyons. It signifies a new departure for the Gurdjieff school, whose exponents have always refrained from proselytizing and assiduously avoided publicity, virtually underground until now, the movement has at last gone public....

[The complete text is available in the [printed copy](#) of this issue.]

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Margaret Croyden writes frequently about the arts. Her most recent book is a memoir, *In the Shadow of the Flame: Three Journeys*, Continuum, 1993. She is a regular

contributor to “The New York Theatre Wire” (www.nytheatre-wire.com).

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Meetings with Remarkable Men

by **G. I. Gurdjieff**

A Conversation on the book by Professor Roy Finch of Sarah Lawrence College, Lord Pentland, and Lawrence Morris

Roy Finch: We are discussing today a book which has been read for more than thirty years by people in different parts of the world, but is only now being published for the first time in English. This book is entitled [Meetings with Remarkable Men](#), and it is by one of the most fascinating and remarkable men of our century, G. I. Gurdjieff.

The general public has heard little of Gurdjieff—perhaps has not even heard his name, but his ideas and teachings have had a profound influence. He was born in 1877 in the Armenian city of Alexandropol, near the Turkish-Russian border. His life was spent in Asia, Russia, and France, although he traveled everywhere. He visited the United States several times. He died in 1949.

To discuss this long-awaited book, we have with us two men who have had a long familiarity with these ideas: [Lord Pentland](#), who is connected with a New York engineering firm, and Lawrence Morris, a former foreign service officer in Washington. I wonder, Lord Pentland, if you would begin the discussion by telling us what the nature of this book is? Could you describe it to us?

Lord Pentland: By birth Gurdjieff was a Greek from Asia Minor. In his youth, about which nothing is known except what he himself wrote down in this book, he engaged himself on this series of journeys into the remotest regions of central Asia, where so many of the most ancient civilizations have had their source. In later years he lived chiefly in Paris, where he had immense influence as a teacher and writer about the ideas which he found there in Asia and which he had put together into a system intelligible to the West. It is a system of knowledge about man, and man's search for a real understanding of his situation on this planet. This is his second book, published fourteen years after his first. The form of the book, as Gurdjieff says in the Introduction, is from questions which were frequently put to him about his

own personal life and these travels that he made, and particularly the question, “What remarkable men have you met?” To this, the book responds in a series of stories, each bearing as its title the name of one of the men he knew, and whose influence had left its mark on his whole life....

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

The Holy War

by René Daumal

translated by D. M. Dooling

I am going to write a poem about war. Perhaps it will not be a real poem, but it will be about a real war.

It will not be a real poem, because if the real poet were here and if the news spread through the crowd that he was going to speak—then a great silence would fall; at the first glimpse, a heavy silence would swell up, a silence big with a thousand thunderbolts.

The poet would be visible; we would see him; seeing him, he would see us; and we would fade away into our own poor shadows, we would resent his being so real, we sickly ones, we troubled ones, we uneasy ones.

He would be here, full to bursting with the thousand thunderbolts of the multitude of enemies he contains—for he contains them, and satisfies them when he wishes—incandescent with pain and holy anger, yet as still as a man lighting a fuse, in the great silence he would open a little tap, the very small tap of the mill of words, and let flow a poem, such a poem that it would turn you green.

What I am going to make won't be a real, poetic, poet's poem for if the word "war" were used in a real poem—then war, the real war that the real poet speaks about, war without mercy, war without truce would break out for good in our inmost hearts.

For in a real poem words bear their own facts.

But neither will this be a philosophical discourse. For to be a philosopher, to love the truth more than oneself, one must have died to self-deception, one must have killed the treacherous smugness of dream and cozy fantasy. And that is the aim and the end of the war; and the war has hardly begun, there are still traitors to unmask.

Nor will it be a work of learning. For to be learned, to see and love things as they are, one must be

oneself, and love to see oneself as one is. One must have broken the deceiving mirrors, one must have slain with a pitiless look the insinuating phantoms. And that is the aim and the end of the war, and the war has hardly begun; there are still masks to tear off.

Nor will it be an eager song. For enthusiasm is stable when the god stands up, when the enemies are no more than formless forces, when the clangor of war rings out deafeningly; and the war has hardly begun, we haven't yet thrown our bedding into the fire.

Nor will it be a magical invocation, for the magician prays to his god, "Do what I want," and he refuses to make war on his worst enemy, if the enemy pleases him; nor will it be a believer's prayer either, for at his best the believer prays "Do what you want," and for that he must put iron and fire into the entrails of his dearest enemy—which is the act of war, and the war has hardly begun.

This will be something of all that, some hope and effort towards all that, and it will also be something of a call to arms. A call that the play of echoes can send back to me, and that perhaps others will hear.

You can guess now of what kind of war I wish to speak.

Of other wars—of those one undergoes—I shall not speak. If I were to speak of them, it would be ordinary literature, a makeshift, a substitute, an excuse. Just as it has happened that I have used the word "terrible" when I didn't have gooseflesh. Just as I've used the expression "dying of hunger" when I hadn't reached the point of stealing from the food-stands. Just as I've spoken of madness before having tried to consider infinity through a keyhole. As I've spoken of death before my tongue has known the salt taste of the irreparable. As certain people speak of purity, who have always considered themselves superior to the domestic pig. As some speak of liberty, who adore and polish their chains; as some speak of love, who love nothing but their own shadows; or of sacrifice, who wouldn't for all the world cut off their littlest finger. Or of knowledge, who disguise themselves from their own eyes. Just as it is our great infirmity to talk in order to see nothing.

This would be a feeble substitute, like the old and sick speaking with relish of blows given and received by the young and strong.

Have I then the right to speak of this other war—the one which is not just undergone—when it has perhaps not yet irremediably taken fire in me? When I am still engaged only in skirmishes? Certainly, I rarely have the right. But "rarely the right" also means "sometimes the duty"—and above all, "the need," for I will never have too many allies.

I shall try to speak then of the holy war.

May it break out and continue without truce! Now and again it takes fire, but never for long. At the first small hint of victory, I flatter myself that I've won, and I play the part of the generous victor and come to terms with the enemy. There are traitors in the house, but they have the look of friends and it would be so

unpleasant to unmask them! They have their place in the chimney corner, their armchairs and their slippers; they come in when I'm drowsy, offering me a compliment, or a funny or exciting story, or flowers and goodies—sometimes a fine hat with feathers. They speak in the first person, and it's my voice I think I'm hearing, my voice in which I'm speaking: "I am ... , I know ... , I wish" But it's all lies! Lies grafted on my flesh, abscesses screaming at me: "Don't slaughter us, we're of the same blood!"—pustules whining: "We are your greatest treasure, your only good feature; go on feeding us, it doesn't cost all that much!"

And there are so many of them; and they are charming, they are pathetic, they are arrogant, they practice blackmail, they band together ... but they are barbarians who respect nothing—nothing that is true, I mean, because they cringe in front of everything else and are tied in knots with respect. It's thanks to their ideas that I wear my mask; they take possession of everything, including the keys to the costume wardrobe. They tell me: "We'll dress you; how could you ever present yourself properly in the great world without us?" But oh! It would be better to go naked as a grub!

The only weapon I have against these armies is a very tiny sword, so little you can hardly see it with the naked eye; though, true enough, it is sharp as a razor and quite deadly. But it is really so small that I lose it from one minute to the next. I never know where I stuck it last; and when I find it again, it seems too heavy to carry and too clumsy to wield—my deadly little sword.

Myself, I only know how to say a very few words, and they are more like squeaks; while *they* even know how to write. There's always one of them in my mouth, lying in wait for my words when I want to say something. He listens and keeps everything for himself, and speaks in *my* place using my words but in his own filthy accent. And it's thanks to him if anyone pays attention to me or thinks I'm intelligent. (But the ones who know aren't fooled; if only I could listen to the ones who know!)

These phantoms rob me of everything. And having done so, it's easy for them to make me feel sorry for them: "We protect you, we express you, we make the most of you, and you want to murder us! But you are just destroying yourself when you scold us, when you hit us cruelly on our sensitive noses—us, your good friends."

And an unclean pity with its tepid breath comes to weaken me. Light be against you, phantoms! If I turn on the lamp, you stop talking. When I open an eye, you disappear—because you are carved out of the void, painted grimaces of emptiness. Against you, war to the finish—without pity, without tolerance. There is only one right: the right to *be* more.

But now it's a different song. They have a feeling that they have been spotted; so they pretend to be conciliatory. "Of course, you're the master. But what's a master without servants? Keep us on in our lowly places; we promise to help you. Look here, for instance: suppose you want to write a poem. How could you do it without us?"

Yes, you rebels—some day I'll put you in your place. I'll make you bow under my yoke, I'll feed you

hay and groom you every morning. But as long as you suck my blood and steal my words, it would be better by far never to write a poem!

A pretty kind of peace I'm offered: to close my eyes so as not to witness the crime, to run in circles from morning till night so as not to see death's always-open jaws; to consider myself victorious before even starting to struggle. A liar's peace! To settle down cozily with my cowardices, since everybody else does. Peace of the defeated! A little filth, a little drunkenness, a little blasphemy for a joke, a little masquerade made a virtue of, a little laziness and fantasy—even a lot, if one is gifted for it—a little of all that, surrounded by a whole confectioner's-shopful of beautiful words; that's the peace that is suggested. A traitor's peace! And to safeguard this shameful peace, one would do anything, one would make war on one's fellows; for there is an old, tried and true formula for preserving one's peace with oneself, which is always to accuse someone else. The peace of betrayal!

You know by now that I wish to speak of holy warfare.

He who has declared this war in himself is at peace with his fellows, and although his whole being is the field of the most violent battle, in his very innermost depths there reigns a peace that is more active than any war. And the more strongly this peace reigns in his innermost depths, in that central silence and solitude, the more violently rages the war against the turmoil of lies and numberless illusions.

In that vast silence obscured by battle-cries, hidden from the outside by the fleeing mirage of time, the eternal conqueror listens to the voices of other silences. Alone, having overcome the illusion of not being alone, he is no longer the only one to be alone. But I am separated from him by these ghost-armies which I have to annihilate. Oh, to be able one day to take my place in that citadel! On its ramparts, let me be torn limb from limb rather than allow the tumult to enter the royal chamber!

“But am I to kill?” asked Arjuna the warrior. “Am I to pay tribute to Caesar?” asks another. Kill, he is answered, if you are a killer. You have no choice. But if your hands are red with the blood of your enemies, see to it that not a drop splatter the royal chamber, where the motionless conqueror waits. Pay, he is answered, but see to it that Caesar gets not a single glimpse of the royal treasure.

And I, who have no other weapon, no other coin, in Caesar's world, than words—am I to speak?

I shall speak to call myself to the holy war. I shall speak to denounce the traitors whom I nourished. I shall speak so that my words may shame my actions, until the day comes when a peace armored in thunder reigns in the chamber of the eternal conqueror.

And because I have used the word war, and because this word war is no longer, today, simply a sound that educated people make with their mouths, but now has become a serious word heavy with meaning, it will be seen that I am speaking seriously and that these are not empty sounds that I am making with my mouth.

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D. M. Dooling (1910–1991) was the founder of [Parabola Magazine](#) and the Parabola Books program. In addition to serving as the editorial director of the journal, she also edited many books including *A Way of Working: The Spiritual Dimension of Craft* and *The Sons of the Wind: The Sacred Stories of the Lakota*, and she abridged and translated Louis Charbonneau-Lassay’s *The Bestiary of Christ*. A collection of her essays and poems, *The Spirit of Quest*, was published in 1994.



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

“The Holy War” by René Daumal

Commentary by Kathleen Ferrick Rosenblatt

[René Daumal](#) was born a warrior poet. As one of the early revolutionary metaphysicians of our century, the teenage Daumal wanted to pillage and burn all the scaffoldings of our rigid, outmoded western thought patterns. In the 1920s, he was one of the first nineteen year-old iconoclasts to shout: Down with political imperialism and capitalist greed!...

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

For William Segal

1904–2000

by David Appelbaum

William Segal taught and embodied a threefold life. Theosopher, artist, and man of the market—in the competitive world of New York publishing—he showed an enterprising mind early and soon achieved professional recognition and lasting wealth as a self-made business man. As an artist, he developed an appreciation for the enigma of self-portraiture and, across the centuries, took Rembrandt as his master. He depicted himself in dozens of canvases and sketches, primarily to study what took place as he did so. To see and be seen simultaneously, he felt, leads toward Essence—toward what truly is, no more, no less—by way of a kind of Zen seeing that he had encountered in the company of Soen Roshi and D. T. Suzuki over the years. That no-mind state, in which inner disharmonies quieten and silence prevails “by still waters,” orients his look as he gazes back at us from his canvases and drawings.

When speaking of the search for the Absolute Self, he drew from many traditional and literary sources: the Upanishads, the Old and New Testament, Eckhart, Shakespeare, and, especially, Gurdjieff and Ouspensky, whom he had known. The Work, for him, is ever expanding, lawfully, on its own, as emanations from its origin gain energy and strength. It encompasses more as finer, more penetrating vibrations spread over more phenomena. This was his expansive vision of consciousness.

The Work, as he conveyed it, seeks awakening to a force of uncompromising rigor and precision. Only in this fashion is one’s presence the master of the situation yet still a servant of God. Ultimately, he taught, the atom of Hydrogen 1—the divine spark in the soul, as Eckhart says—must prevail. The more diligently and creatively one seeks it out in its eternally new and present form, the more complete a human being one may become.

He practiced an inner flexibility that featured becoming aware of authentic novelty whenever it appears and however it appears, in visual art, music, and dance. All the evidence indicates that he began this practice in the publishing office.

He was a man of mystery. His thought loved nothing better than paradox, to which he gave a Socratic turn. He enjoyed leading you—the participant in a conversation, the reader—into an *aporia*. His favorite

question was “Who are you?” He felt that to say anything is a lie and that the real truth is silent. His writings, largely notes, transcripts, brief tracts, and poetic invocations, all point in that direction along the inner way.

At the same time, his special task expressed itself as a striving to become a “man for all seasons,” with its required mastery of the moment in which one must meet the challenge of opposing forces, ever stronger. This alone, he found, strengthens the center as well as the desire for Self. He himself had come across sensitivity to the needs of the situation, whatever it might be, and he helped others to learn. He retained the attitude of a learner as opposed to a teacher—an endearing quality in a guide. He personified that role for many people across many walks of life, some famous and powerful.

What impressed some was his love of language and his ability to coin new words in order to enliven tired school jargon. Noumenal, the mind-body complex, active-passive attention, and the myth of ego exemplify this aspect of his approach. At times he would reach past the boundaries of spoken language to retrieve or coin terms that seemed florid at the time—yet one remembers them still. Not potential, but “potentiation.” There were many others. If the word was odd and grand enough, one could slip off it into the reality toward which it pointed.

Above all, Bill Segal revered the mystery of life as an artist and teacher. His love for it is generously expressed in the stunning variety of his life work.



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David Appelbaum is Professor of Philosophy at State University of New York, New Paltz. He is editor of SUNY’s *Western Esoteric Traditions Series* and of [*Parabola: The Magazine of Myth and Tradition*](#). His writings include *Everyday Spirits*, *The Stop*, *Disruption*, the forthcoming *The Delay of the Heart*, as well as *Real Philosophy*, with Jacob Needleman.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Wm. Segal

by Daniel L. Hess

It is humbling to try to communicate what my experience has been knowing William C. Segal for more than thirty years. He opened doorways to perception for me when I was in my twenties, and he's been doing it ever since.

For more than forty years, Bill has been interested in Eastern thought and meditation and has met, known and studied with many of the religious leaders of our times. Zen pioneers D. T. Suzuki and Paul Reps were personal friends. He studied with G. I. Gurdjieff in the forties and has guided others in the Gurdjieff teaching for many years.

Few people are born with the natural, physical, artistic and spiritual gifts of a Bill Segal. Relatively unknown, in many ways he is the hero Everyman. He has neither hoarded nor squandered his gifts, but has given generously to all those around him. He has learned and relearned the lessons of life, has accepted the difficulties and struggles.

Born in Georgia in 1904, Bill Segal migrated north to New York with his parents, a middle class working couple. Married in 1928, he found it difficult to support his family as a painter and took a job in trade publishing. He soon started his own publishing company, which expanded to ten publications by the end of the thirties.

He took chances with his publications. *American Fabrics* was the *Fortune* magazine of the textiles and garment industry. *Gentry* was an early avant-garde men's magazine. He ran articles on Zen Buddhism, Eastern art, falconry, modern painting—whatever struck his fancy.

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My feelings for Bill Segal have changed over the years. In the early years I wanted to impress him, I wanted to be recognized by him and respected by him, and I suppose I feared him.

The awe and respect that he engendered in those days made me a boy to his man, but as I grew older,

Bill's real wisdom, quiet patience, intelligence and strength became more apparent and more and more a wonder. Spending time with Bill these days is not only fun and interesting as you listen to him, watch him, walk with him, eat supper with him—it's almost a sacred experience.

In the summer of 1971, camping on Long Island with my sons, I received word that Bill had been in a terrible automobile accident. We packed camp and went to the hospital, where I found him with a broken jaw, broken hips, a tracheotomy, a patch on one eye and tubes in various parts of his body keeping him alive.

On the beach, I had found a weathered piece of wood with bark still on it. It resembled a small Japanese sculpture. In the hospital I placed it in the one hand Bill could move. He held it, turned it towards the light, looked at it intently and handed it back to me. He could not talk because of the tracheotomy, but in his gestures was a smile, a thank you, caring and communication.

At the time it appeared he would never walk again, but today Bill Segal's life is more active than many men years younger. He paints, meditates and writes; he is a concerned husband, father and grandfather. He travels to three or four continents every year, and this fall will have a major exhibit of his paintings in Tokyo and Osaka.

DANIEL HESS: At the time of the accident, Bill, lying all broken up and knowing that you had a choice of dying or living, what thoughts went through your head?

WILLIAM SEGAL: Being confronted by death, seeing, being in the middle of it, changes a lot of things. Soen Nakagawa, a friend of mine, paid me a visit. Seeing me he grasped my hand: "Fine, fine, fine, lucky man," he said, "One accident like the one you had is worth ten thousand sittings in a monastery."

The night of the accident I recall intervals of going in and out of consciousness. I remember flashes of great, great pain, then I would pass out. Then someone was saying, "Well it's okay, we've given him the last rites." They thought I was dying, so they had some priest give me the last rites.

Somehow I knew then that if I had lapsed in a matter of attention, if there was any lapse in attention, any self-pity, any thinking, any thought at all, I would have died. So I decided that well, I'm going to try to live now. All I could do was to keep a sort of a thin thread of being there. That meant no refusal of pain, just staying right there. And I was convinced that this alone would pull me through.

So it seems that attention in the deepest way saved your life?

The cultivation of a capacity for attention is probably the most important thing a human being can do, because with developed attention one can come closer to knowing who one is, to knowing the truth about the fantasy of life around us. With attention, a world uncovers itself.

I think with attention, one can lead a creative life as a human being. With attention, one experiences the world as richer, more fascinating, more meaningful; without attention we are victimized, and we victimize others. We are “things” instead of participants in the cosmic game.

Attention helps to bring about organization of energy and refinement of energy, otherwise there would be randomness in the universe as well as around one’s self.

When I am speaking to you, when I’m listening to you, I hope that I’m related and linked to an element of vibration which is equivalent to what one is related to when one sits in meditation. So there is no difference. There is the form and the non-form, which are both in some paradoxical way, one and the same thing.

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We’re in Chester, New Jersey, Bill’s retreat where he’s painted and meditated for more than forty years. He is preparing for the one-man October show in Tokyo, where some 50 of his paintings will be exhibited. Bill’s working on a self-portrait triptych as I walk the studio. He looks up at me as a filmmaker might, framing a shot. Neither of us talk. This concentration is intense. He starts painting early every day and stops just for lunch. He paints with a great sureness. He seems to tackle painting problems almost without hesitation.



**The connection between no hesitation and painting and meditation.
How do you see that for yourself?**

I believe it’s related to freedom from what one could call “identification,” or ego-centrism. I begin to see that this form that paints is simply a transient form which is here, and the energy that occupies this form is free, in the true sense of the word. So whatever presents itself, I meet, without thinking too much about it, giving the subject all my attention, but being a little freer from the ego which spoils any enterprise.

I don’t hope or wish for glory, for fame, for money. I do it because I paint, or I cut wood, or I drink my coffee, knowing that this transient form is going through these motions and it has its place, it has its duties and it fulfills them. I think that’s why I can go directly to any job uninhibited.

As a painter, how do you see the connection between art and meditation?

The question may be one relating to awakedness. The relationship is the same as when one chops wood or drinks a cup of coffee—one is awake or asleep in the sense of an inner relationship. Great art, like great music or poetry, is a tribute to the human spirit.

Does being “awake” come into your paintings?

Most of us go through life without being fed by subtle impressions of sights and sounds. We don't see the beautiful greens in nature. When we don't see the cup, don't taste the tea, we deprive ourselves of the rich food of impressions.

Yes. There are moments of insight where the blind is dropped from one's eyes or one's feelings or one's psyche, and you see the world as richer, more complex, different than one thinks. And this is reflected in the artist and in his work.

The difference between the meditator, the poet, and the painter is that there's probably no difference, except I think the adept lives that way at almost every moment, whereas the poet has a moment of inspiration.

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Later, Bill stops as we're walking up the little hill to his quiet house. Many years ago it used to be a chicken house until a few of us raised it on stilts, put in a new floor, a stained-glass window at one end, and it became a quiet house, with black cushions and benches to sit on. Bill stops to pick up a broken branch near his pond. He looks at it, slowly turning it this way and that, seeing how the light falls on it. He smiles at me. Every aspect of his life has been simplified. And in the simplicity there is beauty and purity.



At 88, Bill still dresses in a signature style, as he always has. He often wears elegant linen vests with work clothes. In all the years I've known Bill, I've never seen him arrogant, nor falsely modest. He speaks about his own accomplishments in a direct way.

When Bill speaks, he looks directly at you; his tone is quiet, soft and smooth, his emphasis is in changing cadences, rather than in volume. He talks clearly and directly, pausing occasionally. His mind never strays when he is talking. Sometimes he will stop talking and not need to talk for a period of time.

Going back, the very special combination in your life of publishing and commerce with the esoteric, meditative side is unusual. How did one feed the other and how did you integrate them?

Whether you're making a magazine or making shoelaces or building a house, there's always an intrusion/interpenetration of different levels of energies, of vibrations. Wouldn't you agree with that?

Right, OK. Well, I had about 10 publications, and I had an advertising business and a lot of people working for me, so I had a lot of leisure.

We're talking now about the end of the thirties? You published *Gentry*, *American Fabrics* and other magazines in the post World War II period. At what point did the ideas of something other than the commercial world, other than the material world, begin to come in?

One day I remember, it was a sunny morning and I was walking slowly down Park Avenue, and I said, "What am I going to my office for? I have all the money I want. I have a beautiful wife, lovely home, everything, but why am I working? I should be doing something else."

Just then a man I knew comes across the street. He says, "Bill, I've been thinking about you. You notice the change in my physique?" And I said "Yes you look much better, Ted."

"You really should do what I do," he replied. "You used to be an athlete but you're getting fat now." I really wasn't getting fat. "Well, what are you doing?" I said. "I'm doing yoga." So I said I'll do yoga, too [laughter]. We went right to the yoga class that morning and I took up yoga.

Then sometime later at a gathering someone said, "Hey, there's a man named P. D. Ouspensky [Gurdjieff's principal student who had just moved to New Jersey from England]. He's a very interesting man. You ought to meet him." So we got into our car one night and went to Mendham, NJ and met him.

What was your work with Mr. Ouspensky at that time?

It was mostly on knowing oneself. Not knowing who we are, we're victimized by life, we fall short of being true human beings.

How did Ouspensky explain the genesis of his ideas?

Well, he clearly attributed them to a certain Mr. G. who had studied in Eastern schools—in Tibet, India, Japan, and so on.

And you still had not started sitting?

No. In 1947 I met Dr. D. T. Suzuki who suggested that I practice at a monastery in Japan.

It was on that Japan trip that you began sitting?

I don't think I ever sat before. Did I or did I not?... No, I had experience with yoga where you sit doing breathing exercises for a long time.

In Japan I went to three monasteries during a trip of about six months. And coming out of a very intense period, a long sesshin, I said, I've had it now, and I'm going back to Tokyo.



And I remember waiting at the railroad platform, and I was leaning against the wall, and I'd bought a box of strawberries for a penny. Beautiful strawberries for a penny, and I was munching the strawberries and suddenly aaaaah, and I felt absolutely free. And I thought, so this is what it's all about. And I laughed and laughed. And that was right after I got out of Eihei-ji, a monastery in Fukui Prefecture. From then on I began to sit.

I'd love to hear about your experiences personally with Gurdjieff, how you met him and what you felt about him.

He came to Mendham, [a 350-acre mansion/farm, New Jersey home of Ouspensky] and I'll never forget him. He made the biggest impression on me. It wasn't what he said. I don't remember much what he said. But he was an astonishing force when he walked in. He just came in and looked at people and sized them up and you just felt something very, very different. He was a man who radiated something. Something very great, and at the same time, very kind—very strong and very kind.

I would say that he must have been in touch with something that most people are not in touch with. And he had a gift, a faculty, of making your time stop. Everything would stop. And one would have sort of a picture, a panoramic view of oneself.

You felt that there was something beyond the life that we know that was going on around him. And you wanted to be part of that. And it's nothing you can speak about or put into words easily.

From what I'm hearing there was a sense of presence that he had that cut through our normal thought patterns.

It was beyond the sensing of the material or the form. One could experience that there is another energy/vibration which we're not ordinarily in touch with. In his presence you felt this presence/vibration and you didn't know what it was.

You felt the truth that you are not you, and things are not what they seem, and perhaps we have things upside down. We only see the surface of the form. And with him you felt that. You felt a new light in the life that we knew around him.

From what I know you began to synthesize Zen meditation and the teachings of Gurdjieff for yourself, which is perhaps very different from what a lot of other people had done. How was it for you in guiding/helping other people?

A teacher or guide doesn't impart knowledge exclusively. The way he is, or she is, is what registers and begins to open up new vistas for young people. One learns something from watching a master—that may not be teachable through books or through words. There is a sense of presence that cuts through normal thought patterns, a sense of what is beyond the material or the form.

The experience of self is not describable. Still the experience is possible for anybody at any moment. What is more difficult is to have the experience throughout one's day, throughout one's life, to see yourself, hear yourself, remember yourself. If this could be carried by people it would change many things.

Zen, Gurdjieff, Tibetan Buddhism and Sufism are disciplines with great knowledge; with due deference, each is headed towards the experience of being here, being aware. Ultimately, though, one is on one's own.

~ • ~

It's a grey day on Fire Island, a community near New York, as our talks continue. Bill's beach cottage—grey, clapboard and windburned—is a studio for himself and his wife, Marielle Bancou. He has lived here for more than five decades, painting landscapes and seascapes.



There is a country comfort to Bill's homes, with clear signs of the artist and the mediator all around, all working together. Marielle paints wonderful illustrated books and will be having a show of her work in Paris next year. Suki, a green parrot and a member of the Segal house for many years, screams on the deck to join us as we begin lunch.

Bill, in this day and age, everyone seems to be having tremendous difficulties with relationships, and yet, I've known you for a long time and I've known you with two wonderful women in your life. (Bill lived with his first wife, Cora, for forty years until her death and has been married to Marielle for twenty.)

The whole trouble, I think, lies in a kind of mass delusion. People are not quite what they think they are. I am not only this old man or this young man or this woman or this child. I am that, but I am also the other, and the other is the substance. If people would realize there is a reality behind the seeming reality, it would alter relationships. We would be more compassionate, more generous, less grasping. Women are generally superior to men in this recognition of what is beyond the form.

To love the reality, not the illusion of reality, would mean love based on a realization that you and I are the same. My suffering is your suffering and your suffering is my suffering. With love between the sexes based on that realization, there would be attenuation of the ego-centrism that spoils all relationships.

How do you approach time, death, impermanence for yourself?

Just the way I'm saying it. After all, I'm 88, I have to face being dead tomorrow or the next day, a year,

two years, a few years at the most. I'm here, I always was here. I was a little boy with shiny black hair and red cheeks and I changed. I was a middle-aged man and I changed. But always, I am. So, I am is forever—I think.

~ • ~

When he is at home, Bill Segal is a family man, when he paints he's totally at ease, relaxed and extremely attentive at his easel and with his subject. When Bill sits he is a Zen monk. Quiet, still, alert, alive, his posture perfect.

You still sit almost every day. Why are you still sitting?

Sitting allows what is ordinarily hidden to be more operative, to be more available. One is able to touch different levels with practice. You think you've reached the maximum of being here, and you hear something else. There is the silence that deepens. And then there's a silence beneath the stillness. There are many layers that can be touched with practice of sitting.

In sitting, sometimes you get a glimpse of the possibilities for being more balanced as a human being. You're home free for a few seconds, and you say well, maybe I can broaden, or deepen it. Then the question is how to deepen it?

If I sit, the clouds clear, skies open. Other times, well, why not sit. It's pure joy sometimes just to sit. This light which is very weak, the weakest force in the world, is also the strongest force in the world. It's our salvation.

When you say salvation, what do you mean?

Living without being dominated by one's ego. Because you can sit for 100 years and still say, oh yeah, I feel good.

How does enlightenment come into your thinking?

Well, the word enlightenment is already a big story. What is enlightenment? Enlightenment must be just the word, the root of light. It's awakening. Awakening to light, to one's self. Suddenly one awakens to another reality, something that is more real than I am. I think that's what enlightenment is. I don't know what enlightenment is.



Do you still fall asleep or are you awake all the time now?

Let me put it this way. Certainly I'm not awake all the time, but there's always a thin thread. It may be thin and perhaps it's not very strong, but I hear the voice, behind this voice that you're hearing.

~ • ~

William Segal's life has been devoted to the harmonious development of the mind. He lives as a balanced human being, in quality of mind, quality of body and quality of feelings. And one experiences this in his presence. He summed it up:

“One attribute of the human being is the potential to keep on growing, to keep on developing. And I think there's room in each of us. I hate to hear someone say, oh well, that man or that woman is sixty or seventy or eighty or ninety or a hundred, so he's finished. There's always something that can be transformed on the upward spiral.”

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Revision: October 1, 2000

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[Daniel L. Hess](#) is an accomplished producer and director of a wide range of award-winning documentary, educational, and industrial films. His work has been shown widely on television and at festivals and museums around the world, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York. His latest project *The Peace of Paper*, a delightful, instructive introduction to Origami, is available from World Information Videos, 310 Riverside Drive, Suite 2025, New York, NY 10025.



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

In Light of Meaning

An Interview with William Segal

by David Appelbaum

There was a question on my mind when I went to see William Segal: why is it that language helps us to concentrate on ourselves?

DAVID APPELBAUM: What beckons you to study human speech?

WILLIAM SEGAL: For me there are two aspects which are most interesting. The first is the power of the word when it is based on a special and mysterious energy which initially gave rise to the word. One says something, and, depending on the energy behind it, the word or sentence arouses or fails to evoke a corresponding energy in the listener. We all know that the same idea in the same words expressed by different people can have quite different impact. Searching for the key to this, it seems that the most important influence behind language is invisible, an invisible energy. From that point of view, a word or a sentence, when spoken with attention, is charged with a special energy. Energy follows attention—where I put my attention there follows a flow of force—and where there's an inner presence accompanying what is expressed, power is added to whatever is spoken.

The other aspect which is interesting is the unique human capacity to poetize language. Why does one combination of words make impact, stir interest or movement, while the same words in different combination fall flat? Poetry plays with words, makes them reverberate....

[The complete text is available in the [printed copy](#) of this issue.]

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Christopher Fremantle

1906–1978

by Lillian Firestone

Of the many pupils who gathered around G. I. Gurdjieff, Christopher Fremantle was among those who continued to work for a lifetime. Tall, patrician, and soft spoken, he personified the gentleman and was able by his efforts and perhaps also by his nature to embody the ideas he transmitted.

He left a distinct mark in turn on his own pupils.

They listened to what he said, of course. Yet often it was just by watching him, trying to tune themselves to him, that they understood, at least for the moment, the seriousness of what he was trying to impart. Occasionally they shared in his joyfulness, which was apparent always, just below the surface.

He was born December 17, 1906; the youngest of five children. According to his wife, Anne, Christopher's parents were devout Episcopalians. They held family prayers every morning in which servants and guests participated. Daily Bible readings for the children were supervised by his mother.

A formative influence was his housemaster at Eton who told the boys, "be nicer," instead of scolding them. After receiving a degree from Oxford, Fremantle studied at the Royal College of Art and became a painter.

Christopher's eldest brother was killed in World War I. His lifetime pacifism stemmed from an awareness of his parents' agony in the ten days during which they watched their eldest son die from his wounds.

He met Anne Jackson in 1927, and they were married in 1930. In 1935, they were brought to the group of [P. D. Ouspensky](#) in London, and found a resonance there to their inner search. During the London blitz, Fremantle went to live with the Ouspenskys at Lyne Place, while commuting daily to his war job in London. The Fremantles were instrumental in bringing the Ouspenskys to the United States, and they worked with them in Mendham, New Jersey, until Ouspensky's death in 1947.

Ouspensky's widow then revealed a shocking secret: Gurdjieff was still alive. "Hurry, don't waste a moment. Go to George Ivanovitch." It was the first inkling Fremantle had that the mysterious figure who had been Ouspensky's teacher was still alive. He left at once for Paris and studied with Gurdjieff until Gurdjieff's death on October 29, 1949.

In 1951, [Jeanne de Salzmann](#), Gurdjieff's successor, sent Fremantle to Mexico to take charge of the groups, a responsibility he carried for almost thirty years, spending every summer there and making numerous week-long visits during the year.

He returned to Paris in 1962 to work with Madame de Salzmann and stayed until 1966, when he was sent to the United States to help guide the groups in New York, Chicago, and other cities, a task he continued until his death on December 19, 1978. His grave is in Swanbourne, Buckinghamshire, England.

Fremantle's pupils ranged from beginners to older pupils responsible for transmitting the ideas of Gurdjieff. They wrote to him. What is inner work? What form should it take in the ever changing circumstances of their lives? Some of these letters are included [as "Letters to His Pupils" on pages 73–171 of *On Attention*] here.

In the 1970s, when Madame de Salzmann asked some of the older people who had worked with Gurdjieff to write about the work, Fremantle began to dictate notes on the aspects he had explored. Read aloud at meetings of his groups, these notes are reproduced [as ten essays on pages 1–72 of *On Attention*] in this volume.

He never gave advice on personal matters. "One can do so only if one knows all the circumstances," he said, "and of course that is impossible." He had another reason as well: his wish that his pupils deepen their own understanding without becoming dependent on him as a "guru." He had a great distaste for people's tendency to use others, to enslave them, and to take the role of "master" when life offers so many willing slaves. "We were not given this teaching to feather our nest," he said. He refused anything that might favor him personally, even a small thing like a ride home on a winter night—particularly if he felt that the one who offered was identified with the outcome of the offer.

His special study was painting. We were encouraged to work with him once a week in a study called "form and color." Professional artists and amateurs alike, we worked for six or seven hours at a time, usually in complete silence, under his tutelage. Like the Zen painters he often spoke of, we tried to practice our art by feeling the life in the subjects we gazed upon, then putting it on paper as simply and directly as possible. More than a study of painting, this was a study of seeing. We had many exercises of looking at objects, then turning away from them to record only what we had taken in. Any invention, any "filling in" with details not actually seen, was quickly apparent. We came to distinguish between the uniqueness of each object and the stereotypical appearance the mind ascribed to it. Each apple, chair or table—any object—given this form of directed attention revealed itself as quite distinctly unique, a subtle relationship of convex and concave shapes. No inanimate object was seen to be completely devoid of movement, no matter how slow. We saw the "livingness" even of rocks. Under Fremantle's patient

direction, we discovered that there were no smooth lines in what we saw. Even a perfectly round orange was revealed as a complex kingdom of curves and whorls.

When the search centered on the nature of color, form was temporarily banished. We studied the tones and tints of just one color. All the tensions, struggles and clashes of color could be understood by limiting the palette to just one. The feeling evoked in us by the shades of just one were surprisingly stronger than feelings evoked by several colors together. The closer the tones, the stronger the feeling evoked. After a year, he allowed a second color to be used. By then, we understood something of the power that a color contained.

Fremantle hated pretentiousness and never mistook apparent seriousness for real effort. One day during a break in our long, silent art project, as we watched the coffee being set out and the milk and sugar passed by some pupils with a certain false solemnity, Fremantle suddenly exclaimed:

“You know of course about the famous Zen Tea Ceremony? Well, what is it? It is really just people performing the very simple daily activity of brewing and drinking tea. What makes it extraordinary is that they do it in a special way, with attention. If we could drink our coffee with attention, people would come from all over the world to watch us. Maybe they would call it the Coffee Ceremony,” he added, laughing.

He showed us in many practical ways that the possibility of inner development lay in a more unified attention. When the attention is concentrated in a special way through exercises, efforts or prayer, it connects our diverse selves to create a new state in which one may experience a meeting between one’s subjectivity and objective reality. This meeting brings a freedom not previously known.

For some of us, Fremantle’s most frustrating and incomprehensible assertion was that conscious forces were trying to assist us, and indeed anyone who made efforts. He steadfastly refused to elaborate, and though we could not understand, we could not forget.

Once, as he was walking east on 78th Street, one of his pupils described a serious problem. “People don’t realize that when they work, conscious forces come to their aid.” The pupil heard an undeniable inner agreement and also a great protest. What are conscious forces? How can they possibly help me? Turning toward his pupil, he continued: “Conscious forces are trying to help you. You are not alone.”

~ • ~

This introduction is excerpted from Christopher Fremantle’s *On Attention: talks, essays and letters to his pupils*, edited by Lillian Firestone Boal, Denville, New Jersey: Indications Press, 1993, 171p. This posthumous anthology gathers ten intensely focused contemplative essays on the immanent struggle with attention and excerpts from letters to his pupils.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Ouspensky

by Christopher Fremantle

Russian author, mathematician and mystic, [Peter Demianovich Ouspensky](#) was born in Moscow in 1878. His philosophic and speculative writings *Tertium Organum* and *A New Model of the Universe* were bestsellers in the United States in the 1920s, but he is chiefly known for his lucid account of the teaching of G. I. Gurdjieff, published posthumously with the subject's consent under the title *In Search of the Miraculous....*

[The complete text is available in the [printed copy](#) of this issue.]

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First published in *Man, Myth and Magic: An Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Supernatural*, 1972, 1982, 1995.

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Revision: October 1, 2000



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

A Theatre for Us

by [A. R. Orage](#)

In conversation recently with a number of the intelligentsia (meaning no less, in America, than people interested in the *Little Review*) the topic perambulated round to the theatre. Wishing to make an experiment for my own curiosity, I asked everybody present to recall the occasions, within the previous twelve months, when he or she had been to a theatre for no other motive than to see a play for their own pleasure. In the confessional it turned out that nobody had once gone to a theatre for the sake of the play alone; there had always been auxiliary motives of an extraneous character, such as a dinner party, the obligation to write a notice, personal interest in a playwright or performer, and so on; and at least nine times out of ten this auxiliary motive was really the principal motive. In fact, but for the tradition of the theatre, the same motive would have taken them to any other place as readily as to a theatre....

[The complete text is available in the [printed copy](#) of this issue.]

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "A. R. Orage". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and somewhat stylized.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Mr. Nyland and the Piano

by Terry Winter Owens

In the early 1960s, at the height of the “Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out,” LSD madness, Richard Alpert (now known as Ram Dass) and Ralph Metzner became interested in the ideas of Gurdjieff. Alpert and Metzner were two thirds of the Harvard trio of professors who championed LSD and were asked to leave the university. Metzner was at that time the editor of *The Psychedelic Review*. Alpert and Timothy Leary had formed the Castalia Foundation with headquarters in a mansion on a 2,500 acre estate in Millbrook, New York, made available to them, it is said, by the Hitchcock family.

[Mr. Nyland](#) was widely known in those days as one of the most authoritative students of Gurdjieff. Although Mr. Nyland always made it clear that he adamantly opposed all drug use, from marijuana to LSD, he wasn't one to summarily dismiss a person because of drug use. Nyland was sympathetic to people who were interested in the Work and he was more apt to be accepting than judgmental. But most assuredly, the focus of his work with groups and with individuals was on pursuing the practical application of the Gurdjieff ideas in daily life, and not on drug rehabilitation.

And so it came about that Alpert and Metzner were allowed to join the Nyland groups which in those days met outside of the Gurdjieff Foundation. One day Alpert and Metzner approached Mr. Nyland with a gift offering from Timothy Leary: a Steinway concert grand piano. As is still the case, Steinway pianos are treasured by concert pianists and amateurs alike and, even in poor condition, are quite expensive. A Steinway grand was not a gift that one would easily turn down. Yet, instead of simply accepting this gift, Mr. Nyland asked me to go up to Millbrook and evaluate it “Why not just take it?” I asked, “particularly if they are willing to pay for shipping it to you.” He did not answer directly but asked me to go up to Millbrook and try out the piano. I have been known to go anywhere to try out a piano, so I agreed.

Because my husband had prior commitments, Mr. Nyland asked the composer/pianist David Greenberg to drive me to Millbrook and also give his opinion of the instrument. Two other people rounded out the delegation. Mr. Nyland warned us not to eat or drink anything that might be offered, no matter what! Stories were then au courant about refreshments being laced with LSD.

On the designated evening of our piano quest, nervous and curious, we set off, with Greenberg at the

wheel. His driving was a preamble of what was to come: when he realized he had taken a wrong exit, he backed down the ramp onto the highway into the stream of traffic. This move was, in my opinion, a tad more dangerous than LSD, but we finally made it to Millbrook.

The mansion at Millbrook sat atop a gentle rise, preceded by a long unlit driveway that had been jack-hammered into rubble. Barriers had been placed at the foot of the driveway and several cars were parked there. Wishing for a flashlight or a guide, we got out of our car and stumbled up the dark driveway.

We knocked on the front door and were told that Tim Leary was expecting us and would we please wait until he was summoned. The house was dark (perhaps the electricity had been turned off?). In short order, Leary appeared and greeted us very warmly. He was quite charming and friendly, and we chatted a bit. He said that he would like to give us the cook's tour. We politely declined protesting that it was a long drive back to the city, but he was insistent. He left, and soon a young woman came to show us around.

To say that the place looked like an opium den would deny its disarray and raunchiness. Yes, we had all seen apartments in the East Village with bare mattresses on the floor, huge candles melted into Salvador Dali shapes and people in various states of undress and dysfunctionality—but Millbrook was something else again. And, yes, we repeatedly turned down offers of refreshment. Finally, standing my ground and refusing to continue the tour, I explained that we had come explicitly to try out the piano. “Oh, the piano! Of course. It's on the back porch.” *The back porch?*

There on the back porch was a disemboweled piano. The innards, the strings and the frame were leaning drunkenly against a wall on which clothes hangers, kitchen utensils, tools, screwdrivers, and the like were hung. Our guide picked up a tire wrench and ran it up and down the length of the strings. “We liberated the piano,” she said blissfully. “Where is the rest of the piano, the keyboard, the case, the action?” I asked stupidly. She did not answer but languidly ran a mop handle along the strings to demonstrate that I was being boringly conventional and obviously didn't know the first thing about a piano's potential. Other people appeared and joined in this concert-from-hell. We slipped away unnoticed.

Mr. Nyland did not seem surprised when we told him about the piano nor did he try to justify having us look into the mouth of a gift horse.

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Gurdjieff

International Review

Spring 2001 Issue, Vol. IV No. 2

Our twelfth issue offers—from several perspectives and points in time—illuminating glimpses of Gurdjieff and the spread of his teaching over the past eighty years. All back issues are available in their entirety as [printed copies](#).

[Georges Gurdjieff: A French Documentary Film](#)

[Sample Only]

The first English text of a 1976 French language documentary film—produced by Jean-Claude Lubtchansky—on the life and teachings of G. I. Gurdjieff. Narrated by Pierre Schaeffer and interspersed with interviews of Michel de Salzman, René Zuber, Philippe Lavastine, Maurice Desselle, Henri Tracol, and Jean Vaysse, each of whom knew Gurdjieff.

[Gurdjieff's Self-Revelation](#) [A review of Meetings with Remarkable Men](#)

This review of *Meetings with Remarkable Men* by Manuel Rainoird was first published in French in *Critique* (Paris), No. XVI (162), November, 1960, at the same time as publication of Gurdjieff's book in French. In this first English translation, Rainoird's thoughtful observations include both *Meetings with Remarkable Men* and *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*.

[Louise Welch — Essence Friend](#)



Gurdjieff's passport photo from the 1930s.

With him, you had an extraordinary impression... It's something that everyone, to some extent, has a taste of—this potential which is impossible to realize by oneself—it appeared when you saw that man, when you saw him in himself, complete, missing nothing that was happening, noticing even the tiniest details.

Maurice Desselle

He was a danger. A real threat. A threat for one's self-calming, a threat for the little regard one had of oneself, a threat for the comfortable repertoire where we generally live. But at the moment when this threat appeared, like a ditch to cross, a threshold to step

David Young met Mrs. Welch in 1960 and studied with her until she died forty years later. In preparing this article, he drew on videotapes and an archive of unpublished notes as well as his many meetings with her. “It is clear now that we understood only part of what she said then. We were helped, and felt grateful, but we took in only what our little cups could hold—and they were filled to overflowing. But it was often only much later, when we had more experience, that we could understand what she was giving us. I am still learning from her.”

[Louise Welch](#) [A Poem by Martha Heyneman](#)

Martha Heyneman worked with Louise Welch for several decades. Her poem provides a heartfelt eulogy and fitting conclusion to David Young’s tribute.

[The Essence of the Work](#) [An Interview with Jacob Needleman](#) *[Sample Only]*

Dr. Jacob Needleman is interviewed by *Gnosis Magazine* for inclusion in their first special issue on the topic of ‘Gurdjieff and the Fourth Way.’ Needleman speaks frankly about what he has found evidence for and personally verified in Gurdjieff’s teachings. He emphasizes Gurdjieff’s psychological ideas about the levels of consciousness and his aim “to awaken the power of conscience.”

[A Passion for Understanding](#) [Notes from an Orage Group, New York,](#) [1927](#) *[Sample Only]*

This material is edited from the notes and letters of Frederick Schneider (1883–1933), who was a student of A. R. Orage in New York in the late 1920s, and spent time at the Prieuré. While the material overlaps some published sources, it offers a fresh contemporaneous report of Gurdjieff’s teaching as

over, one was helped to cross it by his presence itself.

Michel de Salzman

Meetings with Remarkable Men has exemplary value. We are presented with models to follow. It is the “how” that follows from Beelzebub’s Tales. But it may not seem that way at first.

Manuel Rainoird

Do not try to change. Study. When you work, something drops away of itself.

Louise Welch

Now we have a very dramatic moment in the Work, the third generation, older pupils who didn’t know Gurdjieff directly. This is the turning point. Time will tell whether we can continue to gather and be a channel for the forces that Gurdjieff set in motion.

Jacob Needleman

Here one could meet the most interesting people. One afternoon I sat at a table with ... a curious individual named Georgiy Ivanovich Gourjiev.

C. E. Bechhofer Roberts

transmitted by Orage.

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In Denikin's Russia: A Journey Through Georgia

Carl Eric Bechhofer Roberts, a professional journalist who spoke Russian and had previously traveled to Russia and the Caucasus, was acquainted with Ouspensky when he undertook an assignment to report on conditions there in 1919. Roberts engagingly describes a series of meetings he had with “a curious individual named Georgiy Ivanovich Gourjiev” as well as an informed assessment of the volatile social and political situations he encountered throughout the Caucasus. His skeptical but admiring observations provide the first published account in English about Gurdjieff, who gave Roberts an insider's tour of Tiflis. Excerpted from his *In Denikin's Russia and the Caucasus, 1919–1920*, pp. 63–68, London: Collins, 1921; New York: Arno, 1971; Salem: Ayer, 1992.

Two Accounts of an Evening with Gurdjieff

Excerpts from *Episodes with Gurdjieff* by Edwin Wolfe and from *Witchcraft: Its Power In the World Today* by William Seabrook. Seabrook recalls his occasional meetings with Gurdjieff in New York between 1924 and 1931 and characterizes him as a white magician. “I'm not sure I'd care to be one of Gurdjieff's disciples. The man had power.” Seabrook concludes his ten-page section on Gurdjieff with an account of a late night reading from *Beelzebub's Tales*. Wolfe was a member of Gurdjieff's close entourage, particularly in New York. The two accounts of the same evening stand in sharp mutual contrast.

ME — I AM

This incisive essay by Mrs. Staveley was published in 1984 by Two Rivers Press and is reprinted here with their kind permission. It was read on March 21st at the funeral of Michael Smyth—the proprietor of Abintra Books, a long time student of

Mrs. Staveley, and founding member of Two Rivers Farm—who died on March 18, 2001.

Web Publication Only

Peter Brook and Traditional Thought

Nicolescu's extended examination draws striking parallels between the immediacy of live theater in Brook's productions, events in quantum mechanics, Gurdjieff's laws of three and seven, and the development of a universal language based on an evolution of consciousness. Translated from the French by David Williams.



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Georges Gurdjieff

A Documentary Film

Produced by Jean-Claude Lubtchansky

[This French language documentary film, narrated by Pierre Schaeffer, is interspersed with excerpts from interviews conducted by Henri de Turenne. Produced by Jean-Claude Lubtchansky with the participation of Philippe Cambessédès, Maurice Desselle, Philippe Lavastine, Dr. Michel de Salzmann, Henri Tracol, Dr. Jean Vaysse and René Zuber. Paris, 1976, 50 minutes. Broadcast on September 22, 1978 on TFI (Institute National de l'Audiovisuel). Transcript and translation by Jack Cain and Nicolas Lecerf.]

[While the camera explores the above portrait of Gurdjieff, the following quotation from [Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson](#), p. 361, is read by Philippe Cambessédès:]

Faith, Love and Hope

Faith of consciousness is freedom
Faith of feeling is weakness
Faith of body is stupidity.

Love of consciousness evokes the same in response
Love of feeling evokes the opposite
Love of body depends only on type and polarity.

Hope of consciousness is strength
Hope of feeling is slavery
Hope of body is disease.

Pierre Schaeffer:

In the folklore of Central Asia, there is a popular character named Mullah Nassr Eddin, an apparently

bumbling figure with an unremarkable manner but abundant common sense. The following story is ascribed to him. One day he is outside looking in the sand under the heat and light of the sun for a lost object, let's say it's a key. His neighbours ask him: "Are you sure it's here that you lost it?" And the Mullah answers magnanimously: "I am certain that it is not here because I lost it at home." So they ask him, "But then why are you looking here?" The Mullah answers, "Outside there is plenty of light and at home it's dark—I will find nothing there!"

It is with this image in mind, a vivid image of common sense, full of good-humor, that I wish to dedicate this program to the memory of a man for whom this tale is more appropriate and closer to his true spirit than the reputation based on spiteful, exaggerated stories that have been spread about him and which present him as a kind of white or black magician.

I am speaking of George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff...

The fact is, that in television we need a label in order to introduce someone and for Gurdjieff, people have used anything and everything. It is difficult to place Gurdjieff in the usual categories: Is he a writer, a thinker, a poet, a musician, the master of a kind of philosophy or a source of spiritual inspiration? Gurdjieff is all of these, but still officially unrecognized as such in any of these fields. He produced a significant book that we will talk about later, published in a peculiar French that was translated from a strange Russian. Gurdjieff—who inspired [René Daumal](#) and Luc Dietrich, to mention only those French writers who are well known—is poorly considered in French literary circles where he is referred to only from hearsay and with more of a predilection for slander than for truth.

In fact, the memory of Gurdjieff—a man who has never been perceived in his true dimension—has been obscured by shadows that are growing more and more dense for a variety of reasons. First of all, external appearances were against him. He was a Russian refugee indistinguishable from many others between the two wars. He sported a heavy Caucasian accent, an originality, a particular manner of action and speech, and a taste for well-seasoned food for which he was rarely forgiven. Can a philosopher, a wise man, a scientist be allowed to cook and regale friends?! Could he really be at the same time a guru? An Indian guru is more distinguished! The way he conducted himself, as well as those around him, which included all kinds of people, was not at all reassuring. In speaking of the various religions, he showed respect for them all but also held them all in question—which meant that his spiritual reputation suffered accordingly. And finally, he appeared all too modern while at the same time being also apparently anachronistic.

He lived with a kind of community surrounding him—people from various disciplines—scientists, doctors, biologists. He was interdisciplinary; which was most striking for the time, not as it would be today when we encounter creativity workshops flourishing in California. We know very well now what it takes to live that way and to be audacious.

[*Voice-over* quoting one of the aphorisms that were painted on the glass windows of the Study House in [Gurdjieff's Institute](#) at the Château du Prieuré at Avon, near Fontainebleau:]

Here there are neither Russians nor English, Jews nor Christians, but only those who pursue one aim—to be able to be.

Gurdjieff was born in Armenia, in a family of Greek origin. His father was a well known *Ashokh* or bard who possessed large droves of cattle and lost his fortune through massive epizootic disease. Gurdjieff's upbringing was thoroughly scientific *and* religious; while still young he traveled with a mysterious group he called the "Seekers of Truth," exploring for over twenty years the inner reaches of India, Tibet, and the Middle East—where he probably met some of the truths he later presented. His biography is in three parts. The first part, very hidden, is evoked in the book [Meetings with Remarkable Men](#) which provides, covertly, some autobiographical hints and clues. Then, starts his public life in Moscow and St. Petersburg, when he was 37 years old and where he started to transmit a teaching of overwhelming magnitude....

[The complete text is available in the [printed copy](#) of this issue.]

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Gurdjieff's Self-Revelation

A review of *Meetings with Remarkable Men*

by Manuel Rainoird

Translated by Jack Cain

On January 1st, 1877, according to the old Russian calendar; somewhere on the outskirts of two empires—someplace where Europe, with the “noise” and “racket” of its inventions and fashions, has thrust its tide across the great body of Russia; but where the spirit of a millennial Asia remained strongest, forming a natural climate with the support of Turks, Greeks, Tartars, Armenians and Persians; in that region where so many peoples possessing a heritage coexisted—in the Caucasus; in the distant province of Kars, up until then Ottoman but which the Tsar’s armies have just taken; at the hearth of a Greek family, a son was born.

That this child should receive from the outset—thanks to a father who was a carpenter by trade, but who in fact was the recipient of a very ancient oral culture, and thanks to priests of the Russian clergy—an education simultaneously moral and religious, scientific and practical, in short a real education, notable as much by its unity as by the diversity of the influences which shaped it, all this seems to indicate a kind of vocation nurtured by geography.

But that this child and later this man should harbor and foster in himself, reaching unimaginable limits, a spirit of investigation born with the first tooth—that, dissatisfied with the explanations of science, he should investigate during perhaps twenty years, in the course of perilous voyages in Asian countries accompanied by other seekers, a response to questions which ordinary “science” cannot quench; that he should submit to rigorous disciplines, then having transcended for himself the still-living remnants of a knowledge concerning the human psyche, having recreated for himself unity, that he should acquire the conviction that modern man in spite of his abnormal conditions of existence had the possibility by means of a certain *work* to become conscious of himself, to awaken to his true interests; that with this aim he should launch in 1913 in Moscow, an [Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man](#)—all this lends credence to a destiny which is personal, to a calling which must flower “without regard for any person or

any thing.” And what emerged, confirms this. Since this overtly oriental Greek, contending with worldwide turmoil, in spite of difficulties of every kind, as if driven from East to West by the lassitude and the impermeability of men under the influence of their collective insanity, came, most definitely, to abundantly accomplish his labor of renewal at the other side of Europe, on a shore where naturally there could have reached only the attenuated echoes of his call.

This call, capable of interesting those who nourish the mad ambition of “jumping over their knees,” is the very life and work of George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff. But with the public at large, his life and work seem still poorly distinguished from myth. Even though he lived in France for the last years of his life, from 1921 to 1949, sustaining around himself a durable movement, his person, what he really was, remains difficult to place in the context of our habits, our thoughts. What useful facts can be drawn from the experiences that have been reported—often after a single meeting, or openly second hand? They all have the same taste of exaggeration. One seeks some comfort and support from members of the literary community regarding those who saturated us with writings about Katherine Mansfield and Gurdjieff!

In the twentieth century, in our kind of civilization, doesn't the work of G. I. Gurdjieff seem impossible to place? He's not a philosopher, a “thinker” in the sense in which that is meant in Europe. The range of his theories contain too many notions. Behind the points of view that he develops, there is something like a *separate* thing, a thing apart. Work on oneself seems to us poorly understood and finds its expression in distant religions, rather a natural attribute of the Hindus or Chinese. Perhaps we feel affected. But mistrust is mixed with fascination. In the arena where any down-home philosopher may catch our ear, this stranger from the East is suspect: our entrenched critical faculties are slow to stir; neither the awakening of thought nor conscience are of much help to them. Master Freud with his comfortable notions of the unconscious, the dissociation of personality, remains their favorite. Have we put forward as we ought the symbol of the (cosmic) man-machine that Gurdjieff postulates, noting that he also duly resurrected the ancient symbol of the horse, carriage and driver?

We are struck first of all by the least familiar aspects.

At the beginning of [Meetings](#), the publisher's note recalls the assessment of Gurdjieff by the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright: “In the work of this man and in his thought—in what he did and the way he did it—West truly meets East.”¹

Although in this book there is very much a question of the East, *Meetings with Remarkable Men* is not an “Eastern” book.

The call to reason that is the dominant theme of all that he expounds, and the scientific method, applied here to large questions touching human destiny are not devoid of the echoes of our Western heritage.

These indubitable facts, which I had seen with my own eyes, as well as many others I had heard about during my searchings—all of them pointing to the presence of something supernatural—could not in any way be reconciled with what common sense told me or

with what was clearly proved by my already extensive knowledge of the exact sciences, which excluded the very idea of supernatural phenomena. The contradiction in my consciousness gave me no peace and was all the more irreconcilable because the facts and proofs on both sides were equally convincing.²

This evokes a meditation reminiscent of the challenge that Pascal addressed to his *libertine* friends.

~ • ~

If the appearance in French, four years ago, of his monumental work [*Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*](#) received little official response, even though it poured into the marketplace of thought such great riches, can we really be surprised? This literature comes from another place. Right from the start, an action on the part of the reader is required. The look with which the great Beelzebub embraces planet Earth is at one and the same time merciless and good. It obligates. Here, we ought to replace the mythic Beelzebub with Gurdjieff himself, while recalling the picture of him that we know well, which has been widely published. That which emanates from the eyes: a space, an immanent dimension, a call. The immediacy of his presence, of his look within us, does it allow us to realize that launching into his *Objectively Impartial Criticism of the Life of Man* entails risks? Our comfortable notions, our ideas in general must suffer. The reading of distant Zen masters involves fewer trials. The shadows of Time work against the messengers. The content of what they have left evaporates. Under the influence of too many manipulations, real influence is erased.

It is for us to drink the river's water at its source, to seek, starting now, to understand the meaning of an incomparable work, of a destiny apart, achieved in our civilization, before our very eyes. His personality, what he has brought us, has permeated our era and any historian who would endeavor to draw up a panorama of human thought will be unable to account for it.

After *Beelzebub's Tales*, *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, the second book undertaken by Gurdjieff, while illuminating the person of Gurdjieff himself, so poorly known, shrouded in babbled myths, assists us in better placing the meaning of the spiritual investigations that he proposes. He brings us, in a form all his own, *the material necessary for a reconstruction*. But Beelzebub did not emerge fully armed from the cosmos. His critical conclusions, his exhortations, the lasting call that he constructed, the apparatus for a harmonious development of man that he established, all of these are the result of an incessant confrontation, a re-creation based on scattered elements, the product of considerable intelligence, common sense, suffering, and sweat.

Meetings has exemplary value. We are presented with models to follow. It is the "how" that follows from *Beelzebub's Tales*. But it may not seem that way at first.

In *Beelzebub's Tales*, as indeed in the introduction to *Meetings*, which is its sequel, everything conspires to shake us to the core so that we 'forget even our grandmother.' In the portraits themselves the treatment is administered to the reader in another form.

In my opinion, the quintessence of an idea can sometimes be very well transmitted to others by means of certain anecdotes and proverbs formed by life.³

So, a series of familiar anecdotes starts us off. We can listen to them, it seems, with the sole aim of amusement—since the proffered search is not directly accessible. What becomes apparent, what arises from the tale itself after certain encounters, what works *within me*, is a conclusion that is not expressible in words. I listen with my feeling; the material of the *Tales* is projected there; fundamental problems are precisely delineated. But things are shown us from the other side of the glass; the elevation of abstract thought is very far beyond human existence and to arrive there, the seeing of the seeker must cross the high passes of his own darkness.

The chapters of Gurdjieff's books constituted a part of his teaching. He had them read aloud to a limited circle of pupils, invited guests, while allowing himself to modify one passage or another based on the reactions of those listening.

Also, beyond the literary form, we ought to deepen the possible relationship that might be established between this book and ourselves.

On the surface this appears to be a story in the 'oriental' manner but as Gurdjieff says when describing the *Thousand and One Nights*, sacred writings and other—

... works of literature in the full sense of the word. Anyone reading and hearing this book feels clearly that everything in it is fantasy, but fantasy corresponding to truth, even though composed of episodes which are quite improbable for the ordinary life of people.⁴

Everything in it is fantasy, but a fantasy that conforms to truth—transposed for us, for our use, in various modes, at one and the same time biography, novel, and travel journal. But, the author's permanent exhortation remains as an underlying patterning behind all these aspects of life itself. Does the truth of speech belong to language? Even when the truth expressed is harsh, the substrate of aspiration never deviates. But this is no dark mystery and we are very far from supposed black magic, from malevolent powers. This book seems to be dedicated to what we might be—because it arouses in us, it evokes the words brotherhood, remorse. If the material necessary for the acquiring of genuine conscience is found in the context of anecdotes that are impervious to analysis—just as in Zen stories where everything and nothing consort to trivialize the evidence—what already does exist is not in the process swept away. The author refers to “established truths,” to faith.

It is not a question of to whom a man prays, but a question of his faith. Faith is conscience, the foundation of which is laid in childhood. If a man changes his religion, he loses his conscience, and conscience is the most valuable thing in a man. I respect his conscience, and since his conscience is sustained by his faith and his faith by his religion, therefore I respect his religion; and for me it would be a great sin if I should begin to judge his

religion or to disillusion him about it, and thus destroy his conscience which can only be acquired in childhood.⁵

And it is doubtless not for nothing that, within the exemplary portraits, we find slipped in, as experiences undergone, large unavoidable problems, regions of essential darkness around which our knowledge revolves. The figures of each of the seekers of truth illustrate this very well: *My Father*, as if one wishes for the aim of life; *My First Tutor* (Dean Borsh) the destiny of the couple; *Bogachevsky*, objective morality; *Pogossian*, the requirement to work; *Abram Yelov*, work in thinking; *Prince Yuri Lubovedsky*, the cry to emerge from darkness.

Eh, Gogo, Gogo! Forty-five years you have worked, suffered and laboured incessantly, and not once did you decide for yourself or know how to work so that, if only for a few months, the desire of your mind should become the desire of your heart.⁶

If only from the historical point of view, *Remarkable Men* helps us to better understand the body of Gurdjieff's work. Gurdjieff's childhood, his adolescence, his formative years appear in broad outline. No doubt certain paths are deliberately entangled. Who were his real masters?—we have no idea. Transmission abuts the borders of life itself. The Sarmoung Monastery, the Universal Brotherhood—do they exist as he depicts them. It matters little. What has been delivered to us is more than a copy, a correspondence. Let us not try to discover geographic truths in his itineraries. Even though it is touching to find concerning the ruins of Ani,⁷ appearing in a recent art journal, the church of the Pious Shepherd's Wife whose story Gurdjieff reports to us.

The direct, familiar style—so removed from “bon ton literary language,” itself the object of the author's merciless criticism—may prevent us from sensing the summation of knowledge, of first hand experiencings juxtaposed at every detour in the narration and of which we perceive only the fringe. Truly, it's “as if you were there,” whether it's a reception with the Khan or the fabrication of American canaries, performances of a fakir or the retail and wholesale purveying of twenty barrels of herring.

Because of the faithfulness of the rendering, we find that *Meetings* includes as a sub-theme remarkable sociological landscapes, such as that of Tsarist Russia, reminiscent of a somewhat more acerbic version of Chekov. How is it that this ‘science wisdom’ can be as fascinating as science fiction?

What remains is to determine the internal logic of the tale, to identify the thread that guides us through unforeseen trials, each one of which representing the nature of a find.

We have also Gurdjieff's report as an Asian specialist:

Having lived fifteen years uninterruptedly in the West, and being constantly in contact with people of all nationalities, I have come to the conclusion that no one in Europe knows or has any idea about Asia.

Most people in Europe and America have the notion that Asia is a kind of indefinite, great continent adjoining Europe, and inhabited by savage or, at best, semi-savage groups of peoples who just happen to be there and go wild.

Their ideas about its size are very vague; they are always ready to compare it with European countries and do not suspect that Asia is such a vast continent that several Europes could be put into it, and that it contains whole races of people about whom not only Europeans but even Asiatics themselves have never heard. Furthermore, among these 'savage groups' certain sciences, as, for example, medicine, astrology, natural science and so on, without any wiseacreing or hypothetical explanations, have long since attained a degree of perfection which European civilization may perhaps reach only after several hundred years.⁸

It is worth pointing out the extent to which the descriptions of voyages and expeditions, even when they become fantastic, are stripped of exotic trappings. In pondering the style of his second work, the author has chosen to respond to an instinctive curiosity, to an ill-defined attraction which unknown lands always evoke. But whether it concerns going from the Pamir Mountains into India by crossing the Himalayas, rafting down the River Pandj,⁹ or arduous hiking in the mountains of Kafirsitan, towards Bokhara, the secret heart of Islam, we are fed only the barest details; and these are immediately swept past by the flow of the narrative. Our imagination is never given free rein. Each reported trait, each incidental phrase instead of carrying us away, brings us back incessantly to the facts of a unknown landscape in the psychological realm.

Sometimes, as in the *Thousand and One Nights*, the story takes place on several levels at once. "Ancillary" characters in the story (Vitvitskaïa, Soloviev) are developed in relation to the "central" figure (Prince Lubovedsky). Has the stage set, the blocking been carried out according to an experiential logic of which the meaning has been lost? We are up against one of those Japanese boxes, a masterpiece of cunning, of common sense, of well-crafted skill. Apparently it's a cube, an assembly of smooth surfaces enclosing a space. But the joinery, turned inward, looks towards a center.

This series of adventures, these so-called pieces belong to a whole. No matter what passage we recall, what is said has a correspondence elsewhere. There is an untold tale, parallel to the first, which is found higher up, at the high-water mark of *ideas that can be perceived only with time*. These are the ideas that Gurdjieff, by means of literature and other devices, aimed to make accessible to everyone.

Notes

¹ All excerpts are from the English edition of *Meetings with Remarkable Men* which omits the French publisher's note that includes this quotation from Frank Lloyd Wright.

² *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, New York: Dutton; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963, p. 83.

³ *Ibid*, p. 14.

⁴ Ibid, p. 18.

⁵ Ibid, p. 115.

⁶ Ibid, p. 158.

⁷ The passage about Ani is in *Meetings*, pp. 87–88.

⁸ *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, p. 198.

⁹ Translator's note: The Pandj (Pyandzh) River is a tributary of the Amu Darya. These two rivers form the border of the extreme northeastern corner of Afghanistan, where the Hindu Kush Mountains are found, and separate it from the fertile Fergana Valley to the north in present-day Tajikistan. The English spelling "Pianje" in *Beelzebub's Tales* is derived from the Russian spelling "Pyandzha."

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First published in *Critique* (Paris), No. XVI (162), November, 1960, at the publication of Gurdjieff's book in French. Manuel Rainoird is a novelist and playwright living in Paris.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Louise Welch — Essence Friend

by David A. Young

“There is nothing as precious to me as the support of the work of people in the Work—nothing!”

“So often when people discover a ruling passion, they want only to get rid of it—to be more comfortable.”

“I have never felt or seen an effort of work that did not change the atmosphere.”

“It is a big step to come to the understanding that we need to learn to think.”

“My search is your search. We each have a common wish to find out—to find who we are and the direction in which we can grow.”

“Real faith is not the opposite of doubt. It is an affirmation of being.”

“The stronger the group, the stronger the personalities.”

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When I first met [Mrs. Welch](#) in 1960, she was fifty-five years of age, and I was twenty-one. Until she died forty years later, she was my teacher. Nevertheless, she remains a mystery to me. I cannot say that I knew her. If it is true that we cannot see above the level of our own being, then I could see only a fraction of who she really was. In preparing this article, I reviewed videotapes and notes of many meetings with her. It is clear now that we understood only part of what she said then. We were helped, and felt grateful, but we took in only what our little cups could hold—and they were filled to overflowing. But it was often only much later, when we had more experience, that we could understand what she was giving us. I am still learning from her.

Mrs. Welch told us:

We need to know our subjectivity if we want to become available to another kind of experience. My observation is one thing, but to begin to recognize myself as a cosmic unit is more important. Usually there is a block. My relationship to others is cut.

The primary question is ‘What do I serve?’ I need to be hungry for a right connection with what is highest in me and what is highest in the Universe; so I have to see what the connections are. My inner sensations are a hint.

How are we to realize that work is not for what is most delightful, but for *being*. The change is not a change in dream states, but in being—a change in the harmonious balance which will affect the whole being.

I am dual, and it is true that sometimes I am one, and sometimes another. One part wishes to work and the other does not, but sometimes there is a sharp recognition that these two parts operate with their backs to one another. How to look and make an effort of presence to the existence of both?

If I function in the ordinary way, at the same rate of vibration, nothing will change. As long as my body is agitated I cannot experience the quiet that makes me aware of something deeper in myself. That is, I cannot receive higher impressions.

Mrs. Welch brought out the best in us. In her presence we would find that someone we thought of as arrogant, thoughtless, and insensitive would sometimes open up and bring the most moving and sensitive observations. We could not help but be touched, and to begin to look at our peers in a completely new way—full of wonder ... until we forgot.

It seemed during periods of intensive work that she held us all, individually and collectively, in her attention. It was as if we were all imbued with a finer substance and began to vibrate at a quicker tempo. In those conditions, all aspects of our human nature were magnified.

What she said seemed to be very important, and it was not only in her words, but also in her tone of voice. She spoke with authority and compassion, and what she said had the ring of truth. All of her outward manifestations seemed to emanate from a central core of being—of presence.

Mrs. Welch told us:

Under the instruction of someone who knows, we try to remember ourselves by learning how to collect attention. We try to still any outer movements, we quiet the body. We begin to study where our attention has been caught in order to free it—free it from where it is

caught in physical tension, in anxiety, in the constant flow of random thoughts. We try to draw together this fragmented substance we need for our work. Our work is in the direction of self-remembering—remembering the self as a whole. What I am going toward is the central feeling of myself: I am. I exist.

Without attention I do not exist. Always my attention is taken—by anything, by everything. It is taken. But it can be free. Collect attention, work for attention, learn to place your attention. When I make a serious effort to place my attention somewhere, relaxation begins, energies begin to take their correct place. The way begins to be opened for something other to appear.

Although it is possible to record many of the things she said, that is very different from her direct, oral communication.

[Dr. William J. Welch](#), Mrs. Welch's husband, once said that if books alone could convey understanding, all the bookcases would be enlightened!

Both she and Dr. Welch were full of good humour, and there was always much laughter at our meetings. The Welches were serious, but not solemn or heavy, and when anyone spoke they turned the full light of their attention on that person. In replying to a question someone raised, Dr. Welch said the following:



It is necessary to be in touch with the preoccupations that prevent one from seeing. When I look at you, what is it that stands in the way of my seeing you? I am not there, I am preoccupied. While you are talking, I'm thinking of my answers—all that material—and I'm not listening, and I'm not aware that my attention is everywhere but on you. As a beginning, it's an exercise in bringing my attention on you—really on you—right now. If I have a question about this, as I do now, and if you have a question, and if I stay with it, and you stay with it, we have an exchange that is almost permanent. That experience is almost eternal. If I can attend to you, and you can attend to me, something takes place that is joyful, and new, and nourishing, and alive.

Until Dr. Welch retired, we did not see him often in Toronto. It was Mrs. Welch who came almost every month from 1955 through to the late 1980s. We were her group. It was as if she planted seeds here and nurtured them for a long time, hoping that something would grow and begin to have its own life.

Mrs. Welch told us:

We all have moments of being awake, but we lose them quickly because we don't value them. Something takes place, but it is out of my control. Something does pierce this shell.

How can I know my way to it? If you want to know what this piercing effort is—it is my wish. There are moments when my wish can cut right through the protective armour and touch something real and authentic. Why are we not here—right now? It can happen in the twinkling of an eye.

When Dr. Welch started to come to Toronto, we began to appreciate how beautifully he and Mrs. Welch complemented one another, and so now it is not possible for me to write about Mrs. Welch without also writing about Dr. Welch. Speaking to our group in Toronto, Dr. Welch said:

We are always looking in the wrong place for purpose, for meaning. We are heavy-laden with this big, blind automaton. Only in moments when our functioning is slowed down does the unengaged purpose appear. What is our life for? What in *hell* are we doing here?

Mrs. Welch gently added, “What in *heaven’s name* are we doing here?”

One weekend when they were unable to come to Toronto, I was speaking to them both on the telephone. Mrs. Welch made me promise to give her love to *everyone*. She repeated this injunction. Then Dr. Welch’s deep voice full of humour said, “In my case, you can be more discriminating.”

Dr. Welch had a wonderful sense of humour, and a rapier wit. He and Mrs. Welch were being driven to our Group house in Toronto, via Bay Street, a route we had never taken before. At a certain point Mrs. Welch said, “Oh look, Bill. They have a Temperance Street in Toronto.” Dr. Welch looked about and said, “Yes, but you’ll notice they keep it at Bay!”

Most of us felt that Dr. Welch challenged us, and Mrs. Welch affirmed us, but they had both been through all the grindstones. Often it was Mrs. Welch who challenged. Yet there was from both of them an affirmation of what was best in us.

When Mrs. Welch first invited me to take responsibility for a group, she said, “This is work for *you*. You cannot help anyone. Try to see your lying.” Later I told her that I felt I was not able to carry this responsibility, but she told me this feeling was, in fact, almost a requirement of anyone who leads groups! “But, I feel entirely inadequate! What is my work here?”

Listen to the group. Practise listening. Listen to yourself, and suffer how you are. It is your work. When you begin to awaken, the first thing you will see is your sleep. As you begin to see your mechanicality, your reactions, they begin to have less power. Seeing is our work.

“But the people in the group also see my reactions, my faults, and this cannot be helpful to them.” She then said, “Mr. Gurdjieff never hid his faults.” I continue to ponder this response.

Mrs. Welch told us:

In order to be useful to anyone, I have to *be*. Otherwise I am just a reacting mechanism, a played instrument.

Before you can be *more*, you must be what you are. Being is how I am, the relation of the different parts held together by my awareness. Completed man is 'in the image of God.' We are incomplete. In us the centres are either mixed or confused, not blended. If we wish to go in the direction of being completely human, we must begin to see why we are not.

I do not know the life of my body ... nor do I know the life of my feelings, nor my intellect, and I know even less about something much higher that also exists in me—although we have all had tastes of it. I am here to live not only in heaven, but also in my earthly part. Work first to see these two natures.

The ego has strength. It has acted as a lookout for a long time, and has looked after me well. It is self-preservation personified, but self-preservation of the small self. Now the ego begins to interfere with the growth of the Self.

If I try to control, I succeed only in repression. All my life I react. I must not try to suppress my reactions, not pretend they don't exist, not cover them with hypocrisy. I must know myself at that moment, and not run away. The first step is to pay attention to the reaction. When we see, something changes because of this light.

We are all stronger than we think we are, but not stronger than we imagine we are. I pretend that I am strong, which isn't true, but the feeling that I cannot, is not true either. Where is my area of choice? It is in the effort of being more attentive, more interested—of giving an objective look at what is going on, *while* it is going on. This is what I wish—it is a moment of awareness while I am experiencing. The experience is not separate, but it is difficult to talk about it in any other way. It is so simple. It is just being here. Just being.

For a long time, I measure everything I see in myself against an image of what I think I *should* be. It is impossible to see from there. If I do see something, I immediately want to change it. I do not want to be like that, and so I do not stay with what I have seen. I must develop the courage to stay with that. Do I really wish to be free, or only to avoid glimpses of my slavery?

Dr. Welch never hesitated to let the air out of our inflated expressions. A very serious and relatively senior member of our group said, "All my life I have given to others!" Dr. Welch said, "You have never given anyone anything. Always others have taken from you." It was a piercing insight, and the person who had spoken immediately saw that it was true.

Mrs. Welch especially encouraged us to see the positive side of things. For example, if we began to see our lack of gratitude, we would be full of regret, but she helped us to see that, paradoxically, we were never so close to feeling real gratitude as when we saw our ingratitude. She also shepherded us away from taking ourselves too seriously. As always, Dr. Welch used other means to help us to see our crocodile tears. One woman who almost always wept whenever she made some observation was described by Dr. Welch as being “too damned damp.”

Whenever we called Mrs. Welch our teacher, she said:

No. Do not call me ‘teacher.’ Mr. Gurdjieff was a teacher. We are all in the same boat. Those who have been working longer may have experienced more, and so may be able to act as a guide for those with less experience, but we are not teachers.

A number of us who had been in the Work long enough to begin to take on minor leadership roles as team leaders were invited to the [Gurdjieff Foundation](#)’s country house in Armonk, New York. There was a large number of people there who had just recently entered the Work. In his introduction on the morning of the first day, [Lord Pentland](#) said, “We have all come here because we are asleep, and wish to awaken.” I remember thinking at the time that the head of the Work in New York should not be telling all these new people that he also is asleep! However, he was expressing the same idea that Mrs. Welch had brought to us.

Dr. Welch said that the Work was not intended to create angels, but real human beings. We needed to see all sides of our being. In my very first meeting with Mrs. Welch, one of the other newcomers said that when she was singing in her church choir, she sometimes saw angels. Mrs. Welch said, “You also have to see the devils.”

On another occasion she said:

We are not interested in psychic phenomena, though many of us have experienced them. We are not interested merely in the experience of beautiful emotional fireworks. Our effort is in the direction of trying to *be*. Work on myself has to do with the relation of inner and outer. Sometimes one goes so deeply inside that one forgets the outer. My work is related to both. Our aim is not to dwell in Nirvana. It is to live and work in life.



After I had been part of her group for a few years, I remember telling Mrs. Welch that I was no longer afraid of her. She said only the word, “Oh,” but her tone was such that I quickly reconsidered my remark! In the early years, she often took us to task. She said later that it was necessary to test people, before giving them responsibility. She encouraged us to question her, not to accept what she said without verifying for ourselves. After many years, she began to let us make our own mistakes, and trusted us to learn from them. There was never any sentimentality,

but there was an undercurrent that we came to recognize, in part, as love. She sometimes said, “Love never faileth.” She used this word rarely, and we could sense that it was full of many levels of meaning that were far above what we usually meant whenever we used the word. She gave us the impression that love was the highest energy of all—that all of us, and all of the created world sprang from this source.

She often encouraged us to work whole-heartedly, emphasizing the importance of compassion. Nevertheless, she did not disparage the mind, but rather encouraged us to give our “best thought” to the ideas of the Gurdjieff teaching. One of Gurdjieff’s central ideas is “being-Partkdolg-duty,” that is to say, “conscious-labours and intentional sufferings.” One summer at Armonk, in an evening discussion, she asked me to say how I understood the idea of conscious labour. I felt it was too easy to say simply, “I don’t know”—even though this would be the most accurate response—so I offered an answer which came from I know not where. Mrs. Welch did not question my comment. Instead, she went on to ask, “What is intentional suffering?” Before I could answer, Dr. Welch said, “You’d better quit while you’re ahead!” I did.

I recall on another occasion speaking to Dr. Welch about the ideas. Trying to make the point that what I was speaking about was not my own experience, I said, “Of course these ideas are only theoretical.” Dr. Welch quickly stopped me in my tracks. “It is *you* who are theoretical. The ideas are real.”

Mrs. Welch was the chief editor of the “*Guide and Index to G. I. Gurdjieff’s [All and Everything](#).*” Those of us who worked with her on this project found that it became a central vehicle for our work. In her preface to this book, she wrote:

Gurdjieff speaks to the whole of a man at once, and we are unaccustomed to that call. This guide and index to *All and Everything* is the effort of a small group of people to move towards meeting this demand... We began with the realization that the meaning of Gurdjieff’s book will not open to conceptual attack, but requires thought and feeling of quite another kind... We discovered that one word would become a thread to the whole teaching as it wove through explanations, parables and humorous anecdotes attaching to itself more and more clusters of meaning. One of us would declare that the clue to the book was the word ‘being’; another pursued ‘conscience’ and a third, Mullah Nassr Eddin, who sometimes appeared to all of us as the key to the character of Beelzebub himself.

She also wrote the script of a musical play based on the legend of *The Juggler of Notre Dame*.¹ It was performed under that title in Toronto, and under the title of *The Clown of God*² in Halifax. A poster from the 1976 production in Toronto says, in part, “Spend a magical four hours in the Middle Ages. Wander and shop among the craft-laden stalls of a medieval street market and sample the authentic fare of the town inn. Mingle with minstrels, monks and mummers as the miracle of *The Juggler of Notre Dame* unfolds around you.”

Most of us from Mrs. Welch’s groups in New York, Halifax, and Toronto took part. We produced the craft goods, cooked the food, built the sets, made the costumes, learned music, practiced juggling and

tumbling, and learned our lines. In both Halifax and Toronto, we worked almost around the clock for several days leading up to, during and after the performance. Mrs. Welch always insisted that we leave any place in better condition than it had been when we arrived; so actors and musicians and all, we finished with brooms, and dust cloths and mops in our hands after the crowds had dispersed. When we sometimes hinted that there was not enough time in our busy lives for all the demands of the group activities, she would remind us that one always seemed to be able to find time for a love affair...

Although the play was a great “success,” it was for all of us, primarily, a vehicle for the Work. The emphasis was not on the destination, but on the journey. Sometimes it did feel like a love affair... sometimes!

It was during these times of great intensity of Work that she passed on special material that we needed. She understood that only in these conditions of Work would it be possible for us to take in such material.

Mrs. Welch told us:

There is something we need to learn about effort: effort is not strain. Maybe I could realize this if my relaxation were deeper. I wish there were a word other than ‘relaxation.’ The closest I can come to is ‘letting go’ of the ego; so that I can touch another layer, a much truer one. Our search is not for miraculous results—not to achieve a result, but to learn a process.

There is a struggle between my wish to gather my attention and my body’s habit of going on with its associations. I cannot fight directly, but I can draw my attention back to my work.

When touching a deeper level, I do not try to do, I watch. There is nothing I can do, I can only try to be. ‘I am here,’ very quietly alert. I try to follow this. It moves in a very quiet inner way, something is touched. It takes place, it has come.

Although she was generous in providing us with clues that would help us in our struggles, she understood that we had to do the work ourselves, and also that there was no point in providing us with a direction until we had come to that point in our journey where a particular direction was needed, and where we were asking for help. Sometimes in a meeting, she would say, after someone asked a question, “Ah! I have been waiting a long time for this question.”

Mrs. Welch told us:

What is this combination of ‘I’s’ which inhabit me? There are many of them. One is a bore, one tries to impress, one has profound opinions—but underneath, something knows all this is a lie. We have to recognize as a fact that we are put into motion by whatever, or whoever, presses the button. We are continually the prey of influences. This is the human

situation. Influences impinge upon me and my organism reacts. My reactions are always passive, but if there is something active in me to meet them, I have a chance. Ordinarily, I am attacked by a thousand 'I's.' When I try even just to pick up this cup with intention, it is almost as if the thousand 'I's' are reduced to two—yes, and no. The effort to undertake something intentionally is an enormous help.

Where is my centre of gravity? It shifts, now here, now there, but it is not related to the central fact of my existence. I need to find that relationship. I need to find ways of returning to it so that it circulates to all my functioning parts. What I wish for is my essential root—to be living in myself and related to the whole of me.

There is a real difference between knowing and believing. This Work is not based on believing, but on working toward being open to what is higher. The higher possibilities are already in us, waiting, but we have not found the connection.

On one occasion Dr. and Mrs. Welch were unable to come to a period of intensive work in Halifax. For years they had been there every summer with their two Canadian groups from Halifax and Toronto, plus several people from their groups in New York. This was the first time they were not able to come. In fact they were never to come to either Toronto or Halifax after this because of the state of Mrs. Welch's health. Several of us were in communication with Dr. Welch by phone during this Work period. Once I told him that we felt they were there with us. On impulse, I then asked facetiously, if he and Mrs. Welch felt that all of us at the Work period in Halifax were with them in their apartment in New York! His serious answer took me by surprise. "Yes" he said, "Much has been deposited in both directions." Over the years since then, many of us have felt that this is truly so, and hence although they are no longer able to advise us directly, what they have deposited in us is still there for us to call upon.

On that same occasion, in response to a question concerning the necessity for group work, Dr. Welch said something that has since become an aphorism for us: "The Work is my independent participation in an interdependent process."

Mrs. Welch said that Dr. Welch had a long-lasting love affair with the English language. As he spoke, he seemed to be searching for just the right word, the exactly turned phrase. What he said was often alive, and fresh, and memorable. In contrast, although I might be expressing the same ideas, I usually felt my words were careless cliches, and I aspired to speak as he did.

Mrs. Welch also loved language, and seemed to have the kind of mind that retained everything she read. She often quoted poetry, psalms, and passages from literature. One of her favourite poems was "God's Grandeur" by Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889):

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.

It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;

It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;

There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

She said:

Why is it that when I look at my daily life, I almost never see that it is extraordinary; that I have a life and that I am living in an extraordinary body. Being alive is a miracle, and I am unaware of it most of the time.

Later she said:

Shakespeare's description of the seven ages of man provides a good picture of the descending octave of the physical body. The body will die... What in us can continue?

She often taught us without words. The care she took in laying the table for a meal affected us, and we would find ourselves later taking the same care when sweeping a floor, or washing dishes. When she watched us as we worked on crafts, or cooking, or construction, it sometimes seemed that she lent us her attention. Seeing that it was possible to work in that way, with care, helped us later to find that quality on our own. She said:

There is a direct relationship between care and the attention I give. I see that when I care very much, I gain attention.

She sometimes told us what she called "secrets," and I remember thinking, "Surely, if she tells us, they will no longer be secrets." Later, I saw that what she told us was a secret, and it might take a long time before we understood what she had said.

Mrs. Welch told us:

If I could really remember myself, much of me would be affected. Anger would take its

proper place. Unknown territory exists in me, it is real. If I try to be open to its influence, the Work works in me. Certainly with my little self I cannot change. I will start each day with preparation, opening myself to help. We cannot complain when we do not receive, because it is we who hinder.

Do not try to change. Study. When you work, something drops away of itself.

When you see anxiety, acknowledge to yourself in your own way how you are, and try not to run away, but to be in it more. Sense it more, see how you are inside, and try to see the distribution of your tensions. Then make a strong effort of relaxation, and try to come to some affirmation of yourself at the end of this.

Better one five-minute effort that is true and intense, and real, than a whole day of 'porridgy' dreaming that you are remembering yourself. Only that which you have earned and verified many, many times, through effort, can be yours.

One of the weekends when she was in Toronto after all the scheduled meetings and activities were over, on a Sunday evening, Mrs. Welch invited me to spend some time with her alone. It was a rare privilege. I had been feeling disheartened, and perhaps she had noticed my state. We met just for an hour or so. Our exchange was quite light. We touched on no weighty topics that I can remember. Nevertheless, her words and her attention seemed to embrace, and penetrate, and heal.

The next morning she returned to New York, and I went off to my office. After a long and difficult day, I was walking home and noticed that my posture was slumped; there was a frown on my face; my mind was churning over the events of the day; there was no spring in my step. Then quite miraculously, I became aware of a feeling in my chest that did not at all correspond to my outer state. It was something joyful, completely carefree, untouched and unconcerned with the petty cares of my day. The thought flashed through my mind that Mrs. Welch had deposited this something in me the night before.

Mrs. Welch told us:

Mr. Gurdjieff brought this knowledge to us in a very direct way. It will take us a long time to assimilate. His rate was so much faster and deeper than ours. But his pupils are gradually understanding more and more—trying to live his teaching. He brought us the need to understand and to search as deeply as we can—never to accept too easily even our own experience, but to try to understand that the way to the source of our own energy, our own truth, is a process. We will change very much in that process, and only by trying to understand it will we begin to return to it—to grow and develop in a many-sided way.

How to make an effort of attention? For a very long time, all our efforts are full of tension and strain. We need to learn gradually to let go.

Trying to divide our attention is an experiment. It is not a state of self-remembering. Self-remembering is a blended attention—the attention of the real mind, the true feeling, and the cooperation of the instinctive/moving parts. There is a division between what represents ‘I’ and what represents my organism and functions. In order to study that, we try to divide our attention, but that is just one step. I am searching for something more inclusive, more whole. If I am in touch with my essential passion for truth, this helps me to call upon that effort of attention which includes thought, feeling and sensation. When for a moment that fusion takes place, I experience myself as a whole.

Begin to feel the relation between inner and outer life. It is necessary to see the reality of the inner life and have contact with it, but we must be present to both inner and outer.

In one state, we lie and are not aware of it. In another state, we lie and know it, but cannot stop. In still another state we struggle with the impulse. See how in all these states the disposition of the parts is different in us. When one is aware, one notices much sooner. It is interesting that on a higher level the quickness is such that one notices before there is any manifestation of action, thought, or emotion.

A strong state of attention is joy. One feels wholly engaged, and that is what the human heart desperately wishes.

We live within a very small emotional range. We think we are experiencing a strong emotion when we become angry, but there is a whole range of emotions that we never touch. We read of compassion, faith, hope, but these are just words to us. We don’t live on that level. All of our experiments are for the purpose of making valid contacts with the higher centres, not something we experience now and then, or read about in books, but something permanent that is our own.

Less than a decade ago, we bought a country place just outside of Toronto so that we could have a place for our summer work periods. The Welches at this time were no longer coming to visit their Canadian groups. On the first day of our first period, both Dr. and Mrs. Welch asked, “Why are you doing this?” My automatic answer was that we valued these periods of intensive work. I telephoned them every day to tell them what was taking place, and to get their advice. They continued to ask me why we were having an intensive work period in Toronto. Gradually, it began to occur to me that we had no idea what we were doing. There was no doubt that Dr. and Mrs. Welch could conduct a work period, but who were we to attempt such an undertaking?

This question worked on me, mercilessly. Gradually it became painfully clear that I did not understand any of the knowledge I had accumulated over the years. I understood nothing! It was a devastating realization. I began to feel the weight of responsibility and to approach a state of despair. I felt very deeply—as never before or since—that I needed help. Then in the midst of this state, I felt that help came—not just to me, but to all of us. I felt real gratitude to Dr. and Mrs. Welch for guiding us, and

goads us, and putting our feet to the fire.

Mrs. Welch told us:

The more I see my helplessness, the more I feel the need to be in touch with the source of energy. I *begin*, thinking I can *do* the Work. It takes time to see my helplessness. A real cry for help does not fail, but it has to be real at the moment, not in retrospect.

The times when we do receive something must not be underestimated. They are real. When we reach a state of deep quiet, when we touch another level of energy, it is very difficult, impossible, to move into our daily activities with that full circulation of energy. Yet it is possible to have some link with that state.

Somewhere I know that if I can be open enough, another force of a higher vibration rate can begin to enter that changes everything—my understanding of my presence here, my relationship to others and to the different parts of myself. How can I help to make myself more available for this energy, more open to this energy? It does not depend solely on my wish. It is not so much that I bring an influence, but that an influence comes.

I was not able to attend Mrs. Welch's funeral. Patty Welch Llosa, Mrs. Welch's daughter, asked me if I would write a eulogy to be read on that occasion. I wrote the following passage which represents, perhaps, the essence of this article:

Early in my life I met Mrs. Welch, and that has made all the difference.

I have often called Patty my sister and she has called me her brother because we are both children of Mrs. Welch. She had a large family, a whole tribe in fact. What is written here may therefore sound quite familiar. Many of us had the same experiences. Nevertheless each one of us felt we had a special place in her heart: that she saw *me*, knew me, cared about my potential, spoke to me. And so each of us wished to try with our best effort to follow her direction with a passion. She often quoted Orage's description: "Man is in essence a passion for understanding the meaning and aim of existence."

We have been so lucky, so fortunate to have been part of her circle.

She inspired us; she called forth talents we didn't know we had; she dared to trust us with precious burdens that buckled our knees, bent our backs, and strengthened us. Big projects such as the *Guide and Index*, *A Journal of Our Time*, *The Juggler of Notre Dame* in Toronto, *The Clown of God* in Halifax, called us to super-efforts. It wasn't just the daring ideas she had. It was not even the wisdom of her words when she responded to our questions. It was her being that shone through and fed us directly. It sparkled in her eyes, it emanated from her posture, her movements, her voice, and it fed us directly—without our

even knowing it at the time.

We shall miss her.

At the same time I know that she has deposited in me something of her own being which is not inert. It is alive and essential.

She is our essence friend.

Notes

¹ *The Juggler of Notre Dame* is a 13th Century French legend about a young juggler's search for a special Christmas gift for the Christ Child and Madonna and the miracle that occurs when he offers his talent on Christmas Eve.

² *The Clown of God* is the oldest known title for the legend of *The Juggler of Notre Dame*.

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Most of the material quoted in this essay is drawn from the unpublished compilation, *Meetings with Mrs. Welch in Toronto, 1955 to 1964 and 1973 to 1987*, December 2000, compiled by Mrs. Margot Dustan, a founding member of the Toronto Group. With one exception, all other quotations came from video tapes of meetings or from memory. The exception is the passage from *Guide and Index to G. I. Gurdjieff's All and Everything*, Traditional Studies Press, Toronto, 1971. The two individual photos of Louise Welch are by Martha Henrickson. For additional material, see "[William and Louise Welch Bio-sketches](#)" by Patty Welch Llosa and "[For Dr. William J. Welch](#)" a eulogy by Roger Lipsey, both in the *Gurdjieff International Review*, Vol. III (2).

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Featured: [Spring 2001 Issue, Vol. IV \(2\)](#)

Revision: April 1, 2001

Louise Welch

The keen attention of your blue eyes penetrates time,
Like the sunburst pin you wear on your royal blue shoulder.
It stabs my flesh like the beam of my own conscience
Stirring up dust in the cellars of my soul.

When I come in soaring on high ideas and tell you,
“Now I see how everything connects with everything else,”
(Again that look from which none of us could hide)—
“So that’s how it is with you today,” you say.

So much for instant enlightenment.

Now I have put on my iron shoes.
I am gnawing my loaves of stone.
When I meet your x-ray gaze on the way,
“Morning is wiser than evening,” you say,
And, “We grope our way”—but also,

“We are not alone in this dark world.”

—*Martha Heyneman*



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

The Essence of the Work

An Interview with Jacob Needleman

by Richard Smoley and Jay Kinney

[Jacob Needleman](#) is an internationally known writer and lecturer on philosophy and religion. He is the author of numerous books, including *The New Religions*, *The Heart of Philosophy*, *Consciousness and Tradition*, *Money and the Meaning of Life*, *Time and the Soul*, and with George Baker, edited *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and his Teachings*. He also serves as professor of philosophy at San Francisco State University. Needleman is a long-time student of the Gurdjieff Teaching. Richard Smoley and Jay Kinney visited him at his San Francisco home in February 1991.

Smoley: You're obviously familiar with many spiritual traditions. Yet you seem to keep coming back to the Gurdjieff Work. What's so special about it for you?

Needleman: When I was younger, I could never really respond to religious language, or to my particular tradition, which is Judaism, or to the other traditions I saw around me. I started my intellectual life as a scientist; I was going to be a biologist, and religion as such had never really penetrated to me. Many of us felt that way about religion, that there was something about it we couldn't believe in or give our hearts to.

When I read the Gurdjieff ideas, I immediately responded to this language that had something of the scientific about it, a cosmological language, and a very sophisticated psychological language. It didn't reject the scientific vision of things; it seemed to have a place for it. It included all the material that science had discovered, and it gave weight to it, and seemed in some sense to go beyond it without denying it.

Another thing was the encompassingness and the unique self-consistency of the ideas. There was no really earnest question that I had that didn't have a response somewhere in this whole body of ideas, whether it was about the universe and nature, ethics, day-to-day life, art, history, war, sex.

There was of course the figure of Gurdjieff himself, particularly as [Ouspensky](#) had presented him in *In*

Search of the Miraculous, which startled me and attracted me in a strange way, both repelled and attracted at the same time.

Having said all that, I also need to say that when I first encountered this teaching, I was rather young, and I was offended by it. But when a person I respected said I should read *In Search of the Miraculous*, I found something in me was drawn to it even though there were many things in it that seemed unbelievable. Things about the moon and that sort of thing that I couldn't accept. Yet there was something else deeper; I felt the voice of some authority that I had rarely encountered before....

[The complete text is available in the [printed copy](#) of this issue.]

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Featured: [Spring 2001 Issue, Vol. IV \(2\)](#)

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

A Passion for Understanding

Notes from an Orage Group, New York, 1927

by Frederick Schneider

Edited with commentary by Allan Lindh

The material that follows is drawn from the notes and letters of Frederick Schneider (1883–1933), who was a student of [A. R. Orage](#) in New York in the late 1920's. While Schneider's notes overlap some of the material in [C. S. Nott](#)'s book *Teachings of Gurdjieff* and the C. Daly King book, *The Oragian Version*,¹ they have the advantage of being a contemporaneous report of Gurdjieff's teaching—as transmitted by Orage—by a student who makes no pretensions of great understanding, but is simply attempting to record what he has heard and seen. In addition, this material is from the period when Orage was editing an early version of [Beelzebub's Tales](#), and thus may provide insights into Orage's understanding of the book.

An interesting aspect of this material is the light it sheds on the apparent differences between the “food diagram” outlined by Ouspensky in Chapter 9 of [Fragments](#) and the description of human digestion in Chapter 39 of *Beelzebub's Tales*. Schneider's notes outline what appears to be a third version of this symbol, with some differences from the other two. It portrays the thinking, feeling and instinctive “minds” as each having a plus and a minus part, and describes the movement of attention among these six “centers” with and without the effort of self-remembering. These differences raise in a concrete form the question of whether such discrepancies are a consequence of a too literal interpretation of the diverse external forms by which an “internal teaching” has been portrayed.²

As to the material's authenticity, there are two questions to deal with. First is the question of whether the original manuscript is genuine. Mr. Schneider's daughter clearly remembers meeting Mr. Gurdjieff in New York as a teenager, and also remembers the letters her father sent from the Prieuré. Some of these notes are copies of letters by Mr. Schneider to an unidentified cousin, others are his brief summaries of lectures, and some contain references to other students, as if they were sharing their notes. There is no

doubt in my mind that the old and faded carbons I worked from were Mr. Schneider's copies of his own notes, and that he was a member of one of Orage's groups in 1927.

However there is a second and much more difficult question, and that is whether Mr. Schneider accurately recorded Mr. Orage's lectures. On this matter, people must exercise their own judgment. "The proof of the pudding is in the eating."³ In addition, one should remember that in [the third series of his writings](#), Mr. Gurdjieff discusses his trip to New York in 1931 and his public renunciation of the form of the Work that Orage had presented to his New York students.

Schneider's original notes are rough and unedited, necessitating extensive cutting and rearrangement. Approximately 50% of the material has been deleted to remove redundancies, personal notes, and hopelessly obscure fragments. In addition, a very small amount has been added to clarify indefinite pronouns and the like, although I have chosen to preserve, for the most part, the agrammatical immediacy of the originals....

[The complete text is available in the [printed copy](#) of this issue.]

Notes

¹ King, C. Daly. *The Oragian Version*, New York: Privately printed limited edition of 100 copies, 1951, 289p.

² "They do not consider that at that period 'being-mentation' among the beings of this planet was still nearer to that normal mentation, which in general is proper to be present among three-brained beings, and that at that time the transmission of ideas and thoughts was in consequence still what is called 'Podobnisirnian,' or, as it is still otherwise said 'allegorical.'" *Beelzebub's Tales*, p. 738.

³ Cervantes, Miguel de (1547–1616). *Don Quixote*, translated by Peter Anthony Motteux (d. 1718), New York: Modern Library Giant Edition, Part I, Book IV, Chap. 10, p. 322.

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In Denikin's Russia

A Journey Through Georgia

by C. E. Bechhofer Roberts

With the gradual ruin of life in Russia during the last years, Tiflis, which had been almost outside the danger zone, had become a centre for what was left of Russian society. One found the strangest people there. Poets and painters from Petrograd and Moscow, philosophers, theosophists, dancers, singers, actors and actresses. Paul Yashvili, the leader of the younger Georgian poets, was once moved, after a hearty meal, to climb on a chair in the Café International, in the chief boulevard of Tiflis,¹ and declare, in a loud voice, that 'Not Paris, but Tiflis, is the centre of the world's culture.' Yashvili, an excellent fellow, was, after midnight, the king of Tiflis. You would find him in the underground cabaret, the 'Chimerion,' a huge hall decorated by the modernist painter from Petrograd, Sergei Sudeikin. The cabaret belonged, I believe, to the Tiflis Poets' Guild, of whom Yashvili was the chief; and Sudeikin had worked their portraits into various parts of his mural decoration. The cabaret was not bad; indeed, for this part of the world, very good. There were gipsy songs, of which the Russians are fond; American Negro rag-time singers—Heaven only knows how they got there!—dancers (like the charming 'Lydia Johnson,' who sent all Tiflis mad for a month); impromptu verse-makers, who composed couplets about the people in the room, not always kindly; and short satirical plays. The show would finish at about four in the morning. During the day you went to numbers of new cafés, owned by private individuals or associations of ex-officers or waiters' unions. Here one could meet the most interesting people. One afternoon I sat at a table with Yashvili, two or three other Georgian poets (among them, Robakidze), painters and sculptors; Sudeikin, Sorin (another well-known Russian painter); a certain Sokolov, who had taken a prominent part in Kerensky's Government in 1917; and a curious individual named Georgiy Ivanovich Gourjiev.

The last was a Russian subject of Greek origin. He claims to have spent much of his life in Thibet, Chitral, and India, and generally in Eastern monasteries, where he studied the ancient wisdom of the Orient. He had had a circle in Moscow in the old days, and many members of it had followed him to the Caucasus in 1917 and had wandered about with him ever since. He was still surrounded by this strange entourage of philosophers, doctors, poets, and dancers. He was not exploiting them; on the contrary, several of them were living on his diminishing means. And by them all he was esteemed, almost worshipped, as a guide to the eternal mysteries of the universe. His admirers were by no means fools;

some of them were distinguished men, and these especially insisted that Georgiy Ivanovich, as they called him in Russian fashion, had taught them more about their particular art than they had ever learned before. He had peculiar notions about music; others about the ballet; more still about medicine and philosophy; all of which, he said, were based upon secret mathematical mysteries in which he had been instructed in the remote hills of Central Asia! He was a man of striking appearance. Short, dark, and swarthy, with penetrating and clever eyes; no one could be in his company for many minutes without being impressed by the force of his personality. One did not need to believe him to be infallible, but there was no denying his extraordinary all-round intelligence. I brought introductions to him, and, fortunately, instead of talking theosophy to me, as I had feared, he was good-natured enough to show me some sides of Tiflis that not all visitors see. First of all, we went to many obscure restaurants, Georgian and Persian, where we ate appetizing food in sometimes unappetizing surroundings. One of these, however, became my favorite restaurant. It was a cellar—the Georgians love underground rooms for eating—through the windows of which one looked out upon the swift and muddy waters of the Kura River. Georgiy Ivanovich spoke Georgian or Persian to the waiters, which procured us unaccustomed and piquant dishes, and discoursed reminiscences to me in his curiously broken Russian. Russia is a great country for professional mystics, and Georgiy Ivanovich seemed to have been in the most varied circles there. His enemies called him a ‘Rasputin *manqué*,’ though they had no authority for the evil insinuations that this title suggested. One day we went to the famous hot baths of Tiflis, from which in ancient days the town took its name. A tall, bearded Persian led us into a bare chamber of stone, where two jets of sulphurous water poured into great basins in the floor. The water was of blood-heat, and for some time we sat at our ease in the pits. Then the Persian returned with a kind of pillow case of thin linen, and, taking the soap which we had bought before entering the baths, he dropped it in the bag, filled the latter with air, and squeezed it out until all the air had disappeared in a vast lather. With the suds he washed and scraped me, and then, throwing many basins of the hot water over me, he put me back in the pit while he attended to my companion. Afterwards he pulled me out again and massaged me in an unaccustomed manner, until I felt several inches taller, much leaner, and very tired indeed. Then we dressed, paid some small sum for the use of the baths, and passed out where the washer-women of Tiflis wash their clothes in the overflow of the natural warm springs of the mountain-side. We went to a Persian restaurant near by, and afterwards went home to sleep off the effects of the bath.

In the evenings, I used to call at Georgiy Ivanovich’s [‘Institute for Harmonic Human Development’](#) and watch him rehearsing a ballet which he had himself invented, composed, and set to music. The story was a Manichaeian theme—the strife of white and black magicians. The dances, he declared, were based on movements and gestures which had been handed down by tradition and paintings in Thibetan monasteries where he had been. The music, also, was of mysterious tradition. He himself could not play a note, and knew nothing of composition; but the academician who interpreted his ideas assured me that he had learned more of the theory of music from Georgiy Ivanovich than in any of the schools. The decorations and costumes were also the work of Georgiy Ivanovich; he had even painted and sewn them himself. I do not know if the ballet has yet been presented; there was talk of the Tiflis Opera House being lent for it; but, when I was last in Tiflis, Georgiy Ivanovich had become a little weary of his pupils and was looking forward to a journey without them to Europe or to Egypt and the East.² In any other man I should have been sceptical of most of his tales; but certainly Georgiy Ivanovich was out of the common theosophical ruck. If he really wanted to go anywhere, were it even to his mysterious monasteries in

Thibet—in one of which, he said, echoing an Indian tradition, Jesus had studied!—I cannot see who would be able to prevent his going. He certainly knew Russia and the Transcaucasus excellently. He knew of strange ancient temples and pagan holy places there, which made me look forward to the journey we proposed to make to them when peaceful conditions returned to the land. In his interesting company my time passed quickly in Tiflis.

Notes

¹ The name of this street, the famous 'Golovinsky Prospect,' was now altered to the 'Rustaveli Prospect.' (Rustaveli is the Georgian classical poet.) The names of many other streets also were Georgianised, to the confusion of the inhabitants.

² He reached Constantinople late in 1920, and I hear that he now proposes to produce his ballet in Paris.

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First Account of an Evening with Gurdjieff

An Evening in the Early Thirties

by Edwin Wolfe

[Edwin Wolfe's account of a 1931 reading from *Beelzebub's Tales* is taken from his *Episodes with Gurdjieff*, San Francisco: Far West Press, 1974. His vignettes—beginning at the Prieuré but mostly in New York City—provide a vivid sense of Gurdjieff. Wolfe was a frequent member of Gurdjieff's close entourage for over two decades. This excerpt is from the chapter titled "An Evening in the Early Thirties," pp. 13–18.]

My wife, Dorothy, and I heard that Mr. Gurdjieff was having some very special people come to an apartment he now used for all meetings. Apartment Q, an inside apartment that looked out on a narrow areaway. Mr. Gurdjieff was to meet late in the evening with a group of American intelligentsia. They were being invited chiefly by William Seabrook. He was an American writer who had had a quite sudden success with a book on voodoo in Haiti and later a second book on witchcraft.

No one in the group that Dorothy and I belonged to was to come to this special evening. It was absolutely and strictly forbidden. So Dorothy and I went.

When we arrived about eleven-thirty in the evening, we found a young girl, a member of Mr. Gurdjieff's Tail, sweeping the well-worn floor covering with a carpet sweeper. Two other people were setting steel-framed folding chairs in rows. They faced a shabby brown covered couch with sagging cushions. This is where Mr. Gurdjieff always sat whenever we met with him in this apartment Q.

An open arch separated the living room of the apartment from a small bedroom that was rarely used. Dorothy and I went into this room and kept out of sight.

Before long people began to arrive. Two women in their fifties came in. They were rather grande dame, dressed elegantly in evening gowns under mink coats. Soon after them a few men wearing black ties

came in. The room was not yet completely arranged; furniture was being moved and a table dusted. All these richly dressed visitors stood looking at each other and at the apartment as though they felt they must surely be in the wrong building.

In about twenty minutes the room was filled with men and women, many in their thirties, some older. Probably the oldest man in the room had soft white hair and was in full evening dress. A red ribbon was stretched across his stiff white shirt front. He came in alone.

Most of these invited guests, American intelligentsia, were writers, musicians, philanthropists, painters and journalists. Among them was William Seabrook himself, somewhat fortified for the evening ahead. Sitting in the front row directly opposite the couch was John B. Watson. His book on behaviorism had made him and his group of researchers in this newest psychological science really famous in this country. Behaviorism was the burning question with the intelligentsia.

At last Mr. Gurdjieff came in. He walked slowly to the brown couch and with a sigh sat down. He smiled at his guests as he toyed with a heavy gold watch chain strung halfway across his abdomen from a buttonhole to a vest pocket.

By this time many of his guests were rather uncomfortable in those wobbly folding chairs with hard seats. Many were obviously puzzled. Some were frowning. It is possible that Seabrook to induce them to come had assured them that they would meet a "Master," in an apartment breathtakingly beautiful in its oriental splendor.

"So," Mr. Gurdjieff began, "who will read my book? I write book, [*Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*](#). But who here can read?"

Cautiously I stuck my head around a corner of the arch.

He saw me.

"Ah, you maybe," he said. "Come. Maybe you be so kind, read."

I walked to a chair near the end of the couch and sat down. One of the Tail came from the rear of the room and handed me the manuscript.

"Now, read America Chapter from beginning," Mr. Gurdjieff said. "Slowly and loudly. Read."

"Chapter 42, 'Beelzebub in America,'" I began. I read for at least a full hour when Mr. Gurdjieff stopped me. "Enough, enough. We rest."

From the kitchen several members of the Tail came in to serve the guests. They were offered Spanish

melon on cheap white plates with a small fork beside the melon. Coffee was served.

John B. Watson moved from the front row to sit alongside Mr. Gurdjieff. "I enjoyed very much hearing your book read, Mr. Gurdjieff," he said. "And by way of appreciation I wish to send you a copy of my book, *On Behaviorism*."

Mr. Gurdjieff smiled and nodded pleasantly. Then he waved a hand toward the grand piano. The top was closed and spread out on it was a formidable array of glasses and liquor in a variety of bottles.

People began at once to gather around the piano. The party became more relaxed, and far more animated. A few of the guests stayed in their seats but most of them grouped around the piano.

After a fairly long "rest" Mr. Gurdjieff spoke. "Now we read some more."

Someone told the people near the piano and they hushed their laughter and talking. Some hastily poured a final drink and went to their chairs with it. When all were silent, Mr. Gurdjieff said, "We read more America Chapter from where stop."

I resumed reading. I read and read and read. By this time it must have been at least three o'clock in the morning. At last almost in a whisper Mr. Gurdjieff said, "Enough, enough."

I stopped reading.

"Oh, no, please," said the elderly man with the red ribbon across his shirt front. He stood up. Tears were streaming down his cheeks.

"Please let him go on," he pleaded. "That part about bread, Proshoro you called it, is the most beautiful thing I've ever heard. Please let him read. Please."

"No, no," Mr. Gurdjieff said quietly. "We stop."

Before long Seabrook, Watson and all the others were gone. Some said goodbye to Mr. Gurdjieff, others simply left without a word.

When they were all gone he told his Tail to come and sit down. Dorothy came out of the bedroom and sat with the others. I moved from the chair where I had read to a folding chair in front of Mr. Gurdjieff.

"You see," he said, "what called intelligentsia in America. Can you imagine? Such empty thing. Intelligentsia they called. Such nonentities."

No one said a word.

“Go, go,” he said softly, “all kinds.”

As we moved toward the kitchen to do the wash-up, Mr. Gurdjieff got up, walked to the door, opened it, and went out closing it quietly behind him.

Second Account of an Evening with Gurdjieff

Our Modern Cagliostros

by William Seabrook

[William Seabrook’s account stands in sharp contrast to Wolfe’s description of the same evening, and was first published in his *Witchcraft: Its Power in the World Today*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1940. His book is a journalistic inquiry into supernatural powers. He contends that witchcraft is not demonic but “a specific, real and dangerous force.” In the chapter titled “Our Modern Cagliostros” Seabrook treats Gurdjieff then Aleister Crowley. He concludes a ten-page section on Gurdjieff with the following account (pp. 187–188).]

Mr. Gurdjieff came back to New York in January, 1931, rented a number of luxurious apartments at 204 West 59th Street, and telephoned me one day that he had written a book. He knew that I liked him. He had not only written a book, but as amateur authors so frequently do, he craved to have it read aloud to a group of people who might be capable of appreciating its beauty and wisdom. He always did things in the grand manner. He asked me to invite as many selected friends as I chose, to his apartments on a certain evening, for the reading, and to enjoy an *Arabian Nights* collation afterward. I knew the supper would be marvelous and felt it my duty to choose only *intelligent* friends to hear the reading. I was accused afterward of having chosen individuals whose intelligence was distinctly in the nine-minute-egg category. If I did, it was as a compliment to Mr. Gurdjieff. Among those who came, I recall particularly behaviorist John Watson of Johns Hopkins, the late Lincoln Steffens, William Pepperell Montague and a couple more of the Columbia pragmatists, George Seldes (I had also invited Gilbert and it seems to me he dropped in for a while), Carl Helm of the *Sun*, two Harvard psychologists, etc. Among the ladies were Irita van Doren, Claire Spencer, Virginia Hirsch, and Blair Niles.

The evening—apart from the superb Algerian melons, stuffed eggplant, stuffed grape leaves, great cook pots of stewed goat or whatever it was, all in true Baghdad splendor—was a complete, if always polite

and amiable, fiasco.

Disciples and secretaries read us long portions of an opus provisionally entitled *A Criticism of the Life of Man; or Beelzebub's Tale to His Grandson*.

Late in the evening, Mr. Steffens and John Watson began whispering. Presently Mr. Watson said, "Either this is an elaborate and subtle joke whose point is completely over our heads, or it's piffle. In either event, I don't see much that can be gained by hearing more of it. I propose, if Mr. Gurdjieff is agreeable, that we now converse for a while."

So we all relaxed, and conversed, and presently supped, with equal amiability on the part of both host and guests. Mr. Gurdjieff was more brilliant, and more witty, than the manuscript had been. He was so agreeable, so keen, and so affable, that Steffens, Watson, Montague, and all the rest of them took him into their complete confidence and explained unanimously their conviction that—unless he was trying to put over a cosmic joke of some sort whose point had not yet become manifest—his future did not lie in the field of authorship. Gurdjieff suggested that his purport might be too deep for our limited comprehension.

There was a difference of opinion among my friends after we had left, as to whether I had deliberately played a joke on Mr. Gurdjieff in selecting his auditors—or whether Gurdjieff and I had been in collusion to make monkeys out of *them* for an amusing evening—or whether Mr. Gurdjieff was spoofing all of us. I'm not quite sure myself. So far as I know, *Beelzebub's Tale* has not yet had a publisher. Gurdjieff is a great man, but I doubt that his field lies in *belles lettres*.

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ME — I AM

by A. L. Staveley

Of necessity a great deal of my work on myself is concerned with this “me”—the me that everyone else can see so plainly and which is so difficult for me to see, especially at first. So much is false, so much is imaginary, so much is habit or conditioning. My ableness to direct my attention is almost nil, my weakness overriding, my wish only unevenly present and then by fits and starts.

But I try as best I can and for a long time it is very confusing. The more glimpses I catch of this unreal, unintegrated bundle of contradictions, pushed and pulled hither and yon by everything outside myself—the more I see I initiate nothing by myself—the more I am bound to ask myself: Who am I? And the more I observe, the more I ask, the less am I able to answer. At the same time I know there *is* an answer and even where the answer is. For one thing there begins to be something like a taste of myself as I exist right now. It is not agreeable, especially to begin with, but instead somewhat bitter. It is very hard to let the taste just be without trying to change it or escape from it or compensate for it by collecting “credentials”—something to offset my dissatisfaction with what I have always taken to be, but is not, myself.

At the same time, unconsciously of course, I cast about to find something to identify with so that I can tell myself “I am this” or “I am that.” In spite of myself I think of “being” as an end to be gained, something to be seen and sensed and cognized rather than what makes seeing, sensing, and cognition possible.

I AM. Because I am, I can. The I am, the isness, is the center. Me is all my functions, all my activities, all my manifestations. It is the circumference. Me is what appears. It is always there. It can, up to a point, be known. Only real I can know “me” beyond that point. But how can real I be in my presence, in my totality, when it cannot be seen, sensed or cognized with my ordinary apparatus—by me? It is asleep and needs to awaken. In a way it is there but at present only as a possibility for me.

There is one thing that can be done and that is to affirm. I am. I affirm my being. Ultimately only the center can affirm the center, and when this becomes more possible for me something begins to turn inward instead of outward to the perimeter, to stillness and silence instead of the constant agitation of

“me” outside.

Several times lately people have spoken of being able to hear the voices of the mind telling them that they are this or that—usually something negative—but whatever the mind tells you, you are not that. It would be good to become more aware of those false voices so that they could become a reminder for us. It is useless fighting them or trying to stop them. What is possible is to make a small stop at the very moment of hearing a mind voice of this kind, then to collect one’s attention and make an affirmation—aloud when alone, under the breath if with others. An affirmation should be made many times every day. It becomes a source of strength, especially if I practice sensing at the same time. Only the real I can know “me.” But it needs to be called, the I needs to awaken. No one can do this for me.

[These words were read on March 21st at the funeral of Michael Smyth—a long time student of [Mrs. Staveley](#) and founding member of Two Rivers Farm—who died on March 18, 2001.]

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Peter Brook and Traditional Thought

by Basarab Nicolescu

Translated by David Williams

“Tradition itself, in times of dogmatism and dogmatic revolution, is a revolutionary force which must be safeguarded.”

Peter Brook

~ • ~

Theatre and Tradition

The continuous investigation of the meaning of theatre, which underpins all of Peter Brook’s work, has inevitably led him to an investigation of Tradition. If theatre springs from life, then life itself must be questioned. Understanding theatrical reality also entails understanding the agents of that reality, the participants in any theatrical event: actors, director, spectators. For a man who rejects all dogma and closed systems of thought, Tradition offers the ideal characteristic of unity in contradiction. Although it asserts its immutable nature, nevertheless it appears in forms of an immense heterogeneity: while devoting itself to the understanding of unity, it does so by focusing its concerns on the infinite diversity of reality. Finally, Tradition conceives of understanding as being something originally engendered by experience, beyond all explanation and theoretical generalisation. Isn’t the theatrical event itself ‘experience,’ above all else?

Even on the most superficial of levels, Brook’s interest in Tradition is self-evident: one thinks of his theatre adaptation of one of the jewels of Sufi art, Attar’s *Conference of the Birds*, of his film taken from Gurdjieff’s book [Meetings with Remarkable Men](#), and of the subsequent work on *The Mahabharata*. Clearly an investigation of the points of convergence between Brook’s theatre work and traditional thought is not devoid of purpose.

An important point needs to be made at the very outset: the word ‘tradition’ (from the Latin ‘tradere,’ meaning ‘to restore,’ ‘to transmit’) carries within it a contradiction charged with repercussions. In its primary familiar usage, the word ‘tradition’ signifies ‘a way of thinking or acting inherited from the past’¹: it is therefore linked with the words ‘custom’ and ‘habit.’ In this sense, one might refer to ‘academic tradition,’ to a ‘Comédie Française tradition’ or to ‘Shakespearean tradition.’ In theatre, tradition represents an attempt at *mummification*, the preservation of external forms at all costs—inevitably concealing a corpse within, for any vital correspondence with the present moment is entirely absent. Therefore, according to this first use of ‘tradition,’ Brook’s theatre work seems to be anti-traditional, or, to be more precise, *a-traditional*. Brook himself has said:

Even if it’s ancient, by its very nature theatre is always an art of modernity. A phoenix that has to be constantly brought back to life. Because the image that communicates in the world in which we live, the right effect which creates a direct link between performance and audience, dies very quickly. In five years a production is out of date. So we must entirely abandon any notion of theatrical tradition...²

A second, less familiar meaning of ‘Tradition’—and one that will be used throughout this essay—is ‘a set of doctrines and religious or moral practices, transmitted from century to century, originally by word of mouth or by example’ or ‘a body of more or less legendary information, related to the past, primarily transmitted orally from generation to generation.’³ According to this definition, ‘Tradition’ encapsulates different ‘traditions’—Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Buddhist, Sufi etc. (To avoid any confusion between these two accepted uses of the same word, a capital letter will be employed throughout when referring to this latter use).

So in essence Tradition is concerned with the transmission of a body of knowledge on the spiritual evolution of man, his position in different ‘worlds,’ his relationship with different ‘cosmoses.’ This body of knowledge is therefore *unvarying*, stable, permanent, despite the multiplicity of forms assumed in its transmission, and despite those distortions brought about by history and the passage of time. Although its transmission is usually oral, Tradition can also be conveyed by means of the science of symbols, by various writings and works of art, as well as by myths and rituals.

Traditional knowledge was established in ancient times, but it would be futile to look for a ‘source’ of Tradition. As far as its deepest roots are concerned, Tradition could be conceived to be outside both space (geographical) and time (historical). It is eternally present, here and now, in every human being, a constant and vital wellspring. The ‘source’ of Tradition can only be metaphysical. By addressing itself to what is essential in mankind, Tradition remains very much alive in our times. The work of René Guénon or Mircea Eliade have shown the extent to which traditional thought can be of burning interest for our own era. In addition, increasingly detailed studies demonstrate the points of convergence in structural terms between contemporary science and Tradition.

One can find a precise point of contact between Tradition and theatre in Tradition’s quality of vital

immediacy—a quality reflected in its oral transmission, in its constant reference to the present moment and to experience in the present moment. Brook himself refers to just this, more or less directly, when he writes:

Theatre exists in the here and now. It is what happens at that precise moment when you perform, that moment at which the world of the actors and the world of the audience meet. A society in miniature, a microcosm brought together every evening within a space. Theatre's role is to give this microcosm a burning and fleeting taste of another world, and thereby interest it, transform it, integrate it.⁴

Evidently, according to Brook's vision, although the theatre is on the one hand by its very nature 'a-traditional,' it could be conceived to be a *field of study* in which to confront and explore Tradition. The reasons for Brook's interest in the thought of Gurdjieff are also apparent: as we know, Brook devoted several years of work to realising a film version of one of his books. We believe that significant correspondences exist between Brook's work in theatre and the teachings of Gurdjieff: and for that reason Gurdjieff's name will recur throughout this essay.

While resolutely remaining a man of Tradition, Gurdjieff (1877–1949) managed to express his teachings in contemporary language. He also succeeded in locating and formulating, in a scientific manner, *laws* common to all levels of reality. These laws assure a 'unity in diversity,'⁵ a unity beyond the infinite variety of forms associated with the different levels. These laws explain why mankind need not be a fragmented state in a thousand realities, but in one multi-faceted reality only.

Aesthetic reality, spiritual reality, scientific reality: don't they all converge on one and the same centre, while remaining utterly distinct and different in themselves? Hasn't contemporary scientific thought itself (both quantum and sub-quantum) uncovered paradoxical and surprising aspects in nature, formerly entirely unsuspected—aspects which bring it significantly closer to Tradition?⁶

Theatre work, traditional thought, scientific thought: such a meeting is perhaps unusual, but certainly not fortuitous. By Peter Brook's own admission, what attracted him to theatrical form as well as to the study of Tradition was precisely this apparent contradiction between art and science. So it is not at all surprising that a book such as Matila Ghyka's *Le Nombre d'Or* (a discussion of the relationship between numbers, proportions and emotions) should have made such a strong impression on him.

The possible dialogues between science and Tradition, art and Tradition, science and art, are rich and fruitful, potentially offering a means of understanding a world borne down by and submerged beneath increasingly alienating complexities.

The Theatre as Field of Study — of Energy, Movement and Interrelations

We believe that Brook's theatre research is structured around three polar elements: energy, movement and interrelations. 'We know that the world of appearance,' writes Brook, 'is a crust—under the crust is the boiling matter we see if we peer into a volcano. How can we tap this energy?'⁷ Theatrical reality will be determined by the movement of energy, a movement itself only perceivable by means of certain relationships: the interrelations of actors, and that between text, actors and audience. Movement cannot be the result of an actor's action: the actor does not 'do' a movement, it moves through him/her. Brook takes Merce Cunningham as an example: 'he has trained his body to obey, his technique is his servant, so that instead of being wrapped up in the making of a movement, he can let the movement unfold in intimate company with the unfolding of the music.'⁸

The simultaneous presence of energy, movement and certain interrelations brings the theatrical event to life. With reference to *Orghast*, Brook spoke of 'the fire of the event,' which is 'that marvelous thing of performance in the theatre. Through it, all the things that we'd been working on suddenly fell into place.'⁹ This 'falling into place' indicates the *sudden* discovery of a structure hidden beneath the multiplicity of forms, apparently extending in all directions. That is why Brook believes the essence of theatre work to be in 'freeing the dynamic process.'¹⁰ It is a question of 'freeing' and not of 'fixing' or 'capturing' this process which explains the suddenness of the event. A linear unfolding would signify a mechanistic determinism, whereas here the event is linked to a structure which is clearly not linear at all—but rather one of lateral interrelationships and interconnections.

Event is another key word, frequently recurring in Brook's work. Surely it is not simply coincidence that the same word covers a central notion in modern scientific theory, since Einstein and Minkowski? Beyond the infinite multiplicity of appearances, isn't reality perhaps based on one single foundation?

In 1900, Max Planck introduced the concept of the 'elementary quantum of action,' a theory in physics based on the notion of continuity: energy has a discreet, discontinuous structure. In 1905, Einstein formulated his special theory of relativity, revealing a new relationship between space and time: it would contribute to a radical reevaluation of the object/energy hierarchy. Gradually, the notion of an object would be replaced by that of an 'event,' a 'relationship' and an 'interconnection'—real movement being that of energy. Quantum mechanics as a theory was elaborated much later, around 1930: it shattered the concept of identity in a classical particle. For the first time, the possibility of a space/time *discontinuum* was recognised as logically valid. And finally the theory of elementary particles—a continuation of both quantum mechanics and the theory of relativity, as well as an attempt to go beyond both of these physical theories—is still in the process of elaboration today.

Like both contemporary scientists and Gurdjieff, Brook is convinced of the materiality of energy. Describing the characteristics of 'rough theatre,' he writes:

The Holy Theatre has one energy, the Rough has others. Lightheartedness and gaiety feed it, but so does the same energy that produces rebellion and opposition. This is a militant energy: it is the energy of anger, sometimes the energy of hate.¹¹

Wasn't it Gurdjieff himself who said that: 'Everything in the universe is material, and for that very reason Ultimate Understanding is more materialist than materialism'?¹² Of course he distinguishes 'matter,' which 'is always the same: but *materiality* is different. And the different degrees of materiality directly depend on the qualities and properties of the energy manifested at a given point.'¹³ So 'objects' would be localised configurations of energy.

But where does this energy come from? What are the laws governing the transformation of non-differentiated energy into a specific form of energy? Is this non-differentiated energy the fundamental substratum of all forms? To what extent can actors and audience at a theatrical performance become implicated and integrated with the formidable struggle of energies that takes place at every moment in nature?

In the first place, we believe that it is important to recognise that, in Peter Brook's theatre research, the grouping text-actor-audience reflects the characteristics of a natural system: when a true theatrical 'event' takes place, it is greater than the sum of its parts. The interactions between text and actors, text and audience and actors and audience constitute the new, irreducible element. At the same time, text, actors and audience are true sub-systems, opening themselves up to each other. In this sense, one can talk of the life of a text. As Brook has said many times, a play does not have a form which is fixed forever. It evolves (or involves) because of actors and audiences. The death of a text is connected to a process of closure, to an absence of exchange. In *The Empty Space*, we read that: 'A doctor can tell at once between the trace of life and the useless bag of bones that life has left. But we are less practised in observing how an idea, an attitude or a form can pass from the lively to the moribund.'¹⁴

Might one not further suggest that the text-actor-audience system possesses another of the important characteristics of natural systems, that of being 'modules of coordination in the hierarchy of nature?'¹⁵ Certainly, in that instance when the spectator emerges from a theatre event enriched with new information in the sphere of energy: 'I have also looked for movement and energy. Bodily energy as much as that of emotions, in such a way that the energy released onstage can unleash within the spectator a feeling of vitality that he would not find in everyday life.'¹⁶ As the bearer of this 'feeling of vitality,' the spectator could participate in other openings and other exchanges, in life.

But what is essential is elsewhere—in the recognition, on its own level, of the action of those laws common to all levels. One can conceive of the universe (as in Gurdjieff's cosmology, or scientific systems theory) as a great Whole, a vast cosmic matrix within which all is in perpetual motion in a continuous restructuring of energies. Such a unity is not static, it implies differentiation and diversity in the existence not of a substance, but of a common organisation: the determining laws of the Whole. These laws are only fully operational when systems are mutually *open* to each other, in an incessant and universal exchange of energy.

It is precisely this exchange that confirms what Gurdjieff called 'the general harmonic movement of systems,' or 'the harmony of reciprocal maintenance in all cosmic concentrations.'¹⁷ The opening of a system prevents its degeneration, and ultimate death. *In-separability* is the safeguard of life. It is well

known that all closed physical systems are subjected to Clausius-Carnot's principle, which implies an inevitable degeneration of energy, a growing disorder. For there to be order and stability, there must be opening and exchange. Such an exchange can take place between syntheses on one single level, or between systems belonging to different levels.

Almost all of the actors' 'exercises' and 'improvisations' in Brook's Centre seem to aim at engendering opening and exchange. First-hand testimonies to this effect are numerous: one thinks of those published accounts of the preparatory processes for *Conference of the Birds*, *Orghast* and *Carmen*.¹⁸ Brook has explicitly said himself that, by means of these exercises and improvisations, the actors are trying to 'get to what's essential: in other words to that point at which the impulses of one conjoin with the impulses of another to resonate together.'¹⁹ Michel Rostain describes how, during the preparation for *Carmen*, one singer would turn his/her back on another, in order to try to recreate the gesture accompanying the other person's singing *without ever having seen it*. Actors sitting in a circle attempted to 'transmit' gestures or words: and in the end the force and clarity of internal images enabled them to be made 'visible.' This is genuinely precise and rigorous research work.

In one exercise during the preparation for *Orghast*, each actor represented a part of a single person—including, for example, 'the voice of the subconscious.'²⁰ In another, actors took part in the recitation of a monologue from a Shakespearean text, delivering it as a round for three voices: 'suddenly the actor bursts a barrier and experiences how much freedom there can be within the tightest discipline.'²¹ And that is what it is essentially about—the discovery of freedom by submitting oneself to laws which permit an opening towards the 'unknown,' towards a relationship. 'To be means to be *related* ...' was the startling formula of the founder of General Semantics, Alfred Korzybski.²² Exercises and improvisations offer the possibility of 'interrelating the most ordinary and the most hidden levels of experience,'²³ of discovering potentially powerful equivalences between gestures, words and sounds. In this way, words, the usual vehicle of signification, can be replaced by gestures or sounds. 'Going into the unknown is always frightening. Each letter is the cause of the letter that follows. Hours of work can come out of ten letters, in a search to free the word, the sound. *We are not trying to create a method, we want to make discoveries.*'²⁴

So exercises and improvisations have little particular value in themselves, but they facilitate a tuning of the theatrical 'instrument' that is the actor's being, and a circulation of 'living dramatic flow'²⁵ in the actors as a group. The theatrical 'miracle' is produced *afterwards*, in the active presence of the audience, when an opening towards the 'unknown' can be mobilised more fully. But what is the nature of this 'unknown?' Is it another name for the unity of indefinite links in 'systems of systems,' as Stephane Lupasco would say,²⁶ in a paradoxical coexistence of determinate and indeterminate, of discipline and spontaneity, of homogeneity and heterogeneity? How can we best understand the words of 'Attar when he wrote in the 'Invocation' to *Conference of the Birds*:

To each atom there is a different door, and for each atom there is a different way which leads to the mysterious Being of whom I speak... In this vast oceans, the world is an atom

and the atom a world...?'²⁷

Traditional thought has always affirmed that Reality is not linked to space-time: it simply is. When Gurdjieff talked of the 'trogoautoegocratic process' which assures the 'reciprocal nutrition' of everything that exists, he was proposing it as 'our infallible saviour from the action, in conformity with the laws, of merciless Heropass...'²⁸ Once one knows that for him 'Heropass' meant 'Time,' one can understand the sense of his statement: the unity of indefinite links between systems evades the action of time—it *is*, outside space-time. Time, that 'unique ideally subjective phenomenon,' does not exist *per se*. So the space-time continuum, when it is considered in isolation, is a sort of approximation, a subjective phenomenon, linked to a sub-system. Each sub-system, corresponding to a certain 'degree of materiality,' possesses its own space-time.

Finally, in certain recent scientific theories,²⁹ descriptions of physical reality have necessitated the introduction of dimensions other than those of space-time. The physical 'event' takes place in all dimensions at the same time. Consequently, one can no longer talk at that level of linear, continuous time. There is a law of causality, but the event occurs in a *sudden* way. There is neither 'before' nor 'after' in the usual sense of the terms: there is something like a discontinuity in the notion of time itself.

Would it be possible to discuss a theatre 'event' without immersing oneself in an experience of time? One might argue that the essence of a Peter Brook theatre event is in its *suddenness*, in its unforeseeable nature (in the sense of the impossibility of precise reproduction at will). Brook says that: 'The special moments no longer happen by luck. Yet they can't be repeated. It's why spontaneous events are so terrifying and marvelous. They can only be rediscovered.'³⁰ Meaning 'never belongs to the past'³¹: it appears in the mystery of the present moment, the instant of opening towards a relationship. This 'meaning' is infinitely richer than that to which classical 'rational' thought has access, based as it is (perhaps without it ever being aware) on linear causality, on mechanistic determinism. At fleeting moments, great actors touch upon this new kind of 'meaning.' In Paul Scofield, for example,

... instrument and player are one—an instrument of flesh and blood that opens itself to the unknown...It was as though the act of speaking a word sent through him vibrations that echoed back meanings far more complex than his rational thinking could find.³²

There is something primitive, direct and immediate in the idea of 'present moment'—a sort of absolute liberty in relation to performance, a revivifying sentient spontaneity. 'The idea of present moment,' writes Pierce, 'within which, whether it exists or not, one naturally thinks of a point in time when no thought can take place, when no detail can be differentiated, is an idea of *Primacy*...'³³—Primacy being 'the mode of being of whatever is such as it is, in a positive way, with no reference to anything else at all.'³⁴

The 'miracle' of Peter Brook's theatre work seems to me to reside in precisely this sense of the moment, in the liberation of energies circulating in harmonic flux, incorporating the spectator as active participant

in the theatrical event. Paradoxically we find all of the ‘points of convergence’ that have been discussed throughout this study embodied not so much in his film *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, but rather in a play like *The Cherry Orchard*. A result perhaps of the difference between cinema and theatre, which Brook has underlined: ‘There is only one interesting difference between the cinema and the theatre. The cinema flashes on to a screen images from the past. As this is what the mind does to itself all through life, the cinema seems intimately real. Of course, it is nothing of the sort—it is a satisfying and enjoyable extension of the unreality of everyday perception. The theatre, on the other hand, always asserts itself in the present. This is what can make it more real than the normal stream of consciousness. This is also what can make it so disturbing.’³⁵ Texts by Chekhov, ‘the dramatist of life’s movement,’³⁶ or by Shakespeare, enable every dimension of Brook’s theatre work to be revealed. In *The Cherry Orchard*, there are specific moments when apparently banal words and gestures fall apart, suddenly opened to another reality that one somehow feels to be the only one that counts. A flow of a new quality of energy starts to circulate, and the spectator is carried off to new heights, in a sudden confrontation with him/herself. The marks etched into our memories in this way last a very long time: although theatre is ‘a self-destructive art,’³⁷ it is nonetheless capable of attaining a certain permanence.

The Ternary Structure of Brook’s Theatre Space

Another remarkable meeting point between Peter Brook’s theatre work, traditional thought and quantum theory, is in their shared recognition of contradiction as the ‘motor’ of every process in reality.

The role of contradiction is apparent in the changes of direction Brook himself has chosen throughout his career, through Shakespeare, commercial comedy, television, cinema and opera: ‘I’ve really spent all my working life in looking for opposites,’ Brook suggested in an interview with *The Times*. ‘This is a dialectical principle of finding a reality through opposites.’³⁸ He emphasises the role of contradiction as a means of awakening understanding, taking Elizabethan drama as an example: ‘Elizabethan drama was exposure, it was confrontation, it was contradiction and it led to analysis, involvement, recognition and, eventually, to an awakening of understanding.’³⁹ Contradiction is not destructive, but a balancing force. It has its role to play in the genesis of all processes. The absence of contradiction would lead to general homogenisation, a dwindling of energy and eventual death. ‘Whatever contains contradiction ... contains the world,’ claims Lupasco, whose conclusions are based on quantum physics.⁴⁰ Brook points out the constructive role of negation in the theatre of Beckett: ‘Beckett does not say ‘no’ with satisfaction: he forges his merciless ‘no’ out of a longing for ‘yes,’ and so his despair is the negative from which the contour of its opposite can be drawn.’⁴¹

Contradiction also plays a central role in the works of Shakespeare which ‘pass through many stages of consciousness:’ ‘What enabled him technically to do so, the essence, in fact, of his style, is a roughness of texture and a conscious mingling of opposites...’⁴² Shakespeare remains the great ideal, the summit, an indelible point of reference for a possible evolution in theatre:

It is through the unreconciled opposition of Rough and Holy, through an atonal screech of

absolutely unsympathetic keys that we get the disturbing and the unforgettable impressions of his plays. It is because the contradictions are so strong that they burn on us so deeply.⁴³

Brook sees *King Lear* as a ‘vast, complex, coherent poem’ attaining cosmic dimensions in its revelation of ‘the power and the emptiness of nothing—the positive and negative aspects latent in the zero.’⁴⁴

Contradiction is the *sine qua non* of successful theatrical performance. Zeami (1363–1444), one of the first great masters of the Noh—his treatise is known as ‘the secret tradition of the Noh’—observed five centuries ago:

Let it be known that in everything, it is at the critical point of harmonic balance between *yin* and *yang* that *perfection* is located ... if one was to interpret *yang* in a *yang* way, or *yin* in a *yin* way, there could be no harmonising balance, and perfection would be impossible. Without perfection, how could one ever be interesting?⁴⁵

For certain traditional thinkers like Zeami, Jakob Böhme or Gurdjieff, as well as for certain philosophers whose thinking is based on scientific knowledge, like Pierce and Lupasco, contradiction is quite simply the dynamic interrelationship of three independent forces, simultaneously present in every process in reality—an affirmative force, a negative force and a conciliatory force. Therefore reality has a ternary dynamic structure, a ‘trialectical’ structure.

For example, Zeami elaborated a law called *johakyu*, to which Peter Brook often refers. ‘Jo’ means ‘beginning’ or ‘opening’: ‘ha’ means ‘middle’ or ‘development’ (as well as ‘to break,’ ‘crumble,’ ‘spread out’): ‘kyu’ means ‘end’ or ‘finale’ (as well as ‘speed,’ ‘climax,’ ‘paroxysm’). According to Zeami it is not only theatre performance itself which can be broken down into *jo*, *ha* and *kyu*, but also every vocal or instrumental phrase, every movement, every step, every word.⁴⁶

Zeami’s comments are still vitally relevant to us today. One can easily imagine, for example, the boredom provoked by the performance of a tragic play, which begins in climactic paroxysm, then develops through interminable expositions of the causes of the drama. At the same time it would be possible to undertake a detailed analysis of the unique atmosphere created in the plays staged by Peter Brook, as the result of conformity with the law of *johakyu*—in the structural progression of these plays as well as in the actors’ performances. But the most personal aspect of Brook’s theatre work seems to lie in his elaboration and presentation of a *new ternary structuring*.

Brook’s theatre space could be represented by a *triangle*, with the base line for the audience’s consciousness, and the two other sides for the inner life of the actors and their relations with their partners. This ternary configuration is constantly present in both Brook’s practice and his writings. In everyday life, our contacts are often limited to a confrontation between our inner life and our relationships with our partners: the triangle is mutilated, for its base is absent. In the theatre, actors are obliged to confront ‘their ultimate and absolute responsibility, the relationship with an audience, which is what in effect gives theatre its fundamental meaning.’⁴⁷ We will return to the central role of the audience

in Brook's theatre space in the next section.

Another ternary structure which is active in theatre space can be located if one accepts the notion of 'centres' proposed by Gurdjieff. He believed that what distinguishes mankind from other organic entities in nature is the fact of being 'tricentric' or 'tricerebral'—a being with three 'centres' or 'brains.' Indeed a human being could be represented by a triangle—the base representing the emotional centre (locus of Reconciliation), the two other sides the intellectual centre (locus of Affirmation) and the instinctive motor centre (locus of Negation). Harmony stems from a state of balance between these three centres.

It is very clear that the conditions of modern life only favour the functioning of the intellectual centre, particularly of the 'automated' part of that centre, what one could call 'cerebral' activity. This ideational element, which is of course a powerful means in man's adaptation to his environment, has changed from a 'means' into an 'end,' adopting the role of omnipotent tyrant. Therefore the triangle representing mankind threatens to break apart, on account of the disproportionate lengthening of one of its sides. Theatrical space, in turn, cannot fail to feel the consequences of this process.

John Heilpern, who has described the C.I.R.T. actors' 'expedition' to Africa, recalled his astonishment when he heard Peter Brook talking about the role of cerebral activity: 'He pointed to the imbalance within us where the golden calf of the intellect is worshipped at the cost of true feelings and experience. Like Jung, he believes that the intellectual—the intellect alone—protects us from true feeling, stifles and camouflages the spirit in a blind collection of facts and concepts. Yet as Brook talked to me of this I was struck forcibly by the fact that he, a supreme intellectual figure, should express himself this way.'⁴⁸ As someone who had branded 20th Century man as 'emotionally constipated,'⁴⁹ Brook sheds no tears for the 'deadly theatre,' which he considers to be the perfect expression of the cerebral element in its attempt to appropriate real feelings and experiences:

To make matters worse, there is always a deadly spectator, who for special reasons enjoys a lack of intensity and even a lack of entertainment, such as the scholar who emerges from routine performances of the classics smiling because nothing has distracted him from trying over and confirming his pet theories to himself, whilst reciting his favourite lines under his breath. In his heart he sincerely wants a theatre that is nobler-than-life, and he confuses a sort of intellectual satisfaction with the true experience for which he craves.⁵⁰

Harmony between the centres facilitates the development of a new quality of perception, a 'direct' and immediate perception which does not pass through the deforming filter of cerebral activity. So a new intelligence can appear: 'along with emotion, there is always a role for a special intelligence that is not there at the start, but which has to be developed as a selecting instrument.'⁵¹

A lot of the exercises elaborated by Peter Brook have as their precise aim the development of this state of unity between thought, body and feelings by liberating the actor from an over-cerebral approach. In this way, the actor can be organically linked with him/herself and act as a unified 'whole' being, rather than as a fragmented one. Through such research work, one gradually discovers an important aspect of the

functioning of the centres—the great difference in their ‘speeds.’ According to Gurdjieff,⁵² the intellectual centre is the slowest, whereas the emotional centre is the quickest—its impressions are immediately made apparent to us.

So it is clear in what way the demands of an exercise can enable a discovery of the common rule by mobilising the intervention of the quicker centres. During the *Carmen* rehearsals, actors were asked to walk while at the same time emitting a sound, then to pass from *piano* to *fortissimo* without altering the dynamic and bearing of the walk.⁵³ The difficulty of this exercise revealed the disharmony between centres, a blocking of the quicker centres by the intellectual one. Compare this with another exercise where actors would be required to mark out rhythms in four/four time with their feet, while their hands kept three/three time. Certain exercises allow something akin to a ‘photograph’ of the functioning of the centres at a given moment to be taken. Fixed in a certain attitude, the actor can discover the contradictory functioning of these different centres, and thereby find, through experiment, the way towards a more integrated, harmonious functioning.

One might want to establish revelatory points of correspondence between the two triangles—that of Brook’s theatre space and that of Gurdjieff’s centres. In particular, this ‘isomorphism’ between the two triangles could well enlighten us as to the role of the audience, in its capacity as catalyst for the emotional centre’s impressions. But that would lead us far from our immediate concerns here: and anyway no theoretical analysis could ever substitute for the richness of a first-hand experience of immersion in Brook’s theatre space.

The most spectacular illustration of the crucial, primary role of experience in Brook’s work is perhaps in the preparation for *Conference of the Birds*. Instead of plunging his actors into a study of ‘Attar’s poem, or committing them to an erudite analysis of Sufi texts, Brook led them off on an extraordinary expedition to Africa. Confronted with the difficulties inherent in a crossing of the Sahara desert, obliged to improvise in front of the inhabitants of African villages, the actors went inexorably towards a meeting with themselves: ‘Everything we do on this journey is an exercise ... in heightening perception on every conceivable level. You might call the performance of a show ‘the grand exercise.’ But everything feeds the work, and everything surrounding it is part of a bigger test of awareness. Call it ‘the super-grand exercise.’⁵⁴ Indeed self-confrontation after a long and arduous process of self-initiation is the very keystone to ‘Attar’s poem. This kind of experimental, organic approach to a text has an infinitely greater value than any theoretical, methodical or systematic study. Its value becomes apparent in the stimulation of a very particular ‘quality’: it constitutes the most tangible characteristic of Brook’s work.

His comments on *Orghast* are as significant and valid for *Conference of the Birds*, as indeed for all of the other performances: ‘The result that we are working towards is not a form, not an image, but a set of conditions in which a certain quality of performance can arise.’⁵⁵ This quality is directly connected to the free circulation of energies, through precise and detailed (one could even call it ‘scientific’) work on *perception*. Discipline is inextricably associated with spontaneity, precision with freedom.

Theatre, Determinism and Spontaneity

How can discipline and spontaneity be made to coexist and interact? Where does spontaneity come from? How can one distinguish true spontaneity from a simple automatic response, associated with a set of pre-existing (if unconscious) clichés? In other words, how can one differentiate between an association—perhaps unexpected, but nonetheless mechanical—with its source in what has been seen already, and the emergence of something really new?

Spontaneity introduces an *indeterminate* element into an evolutionary process. Heisenberg's celebrated 'uncertainty relation,' or 'uncertainty principle' indicates that spontaneity is effectively active in nature. This principle tells us that the product of an increase in quantity of a quantum event's momentum through its spatial extension, or the product of an increase in energy through its temporal extension must be superior to a certain constant representing the elementary quantum of action. So if one were to ask, for example, for a precisely pinpointed *spatial* localization of the quantum event, the result would be an infinite increase on the level of uncertainty of momentum: just as if one were to ask for a precisely pinpointed *temporal* localisation, the result would be an infinite increase in the level of energy. There is no need for a high degree of sophistication in mathematics or physics to understand that this signifies the impossibility of a precise localisation in space-time of any quantum event. The concept of *identity* in a classical particle (identity defined in relation to the particle itself, as a part separate from the Whole) is therefore necessarily smashed apart.

The quantum event is not made up of wave or particle, it is simultaneously wave and particle. The impossibility of precisely locating a quantum event in space-time can be understood as a consequence of the in-separability of events. Their 'aleatory' or 'probabilist' character does not reflect the action of 'chance.' The aleatory quantum is constructive, it has a direction—that of the self-organization of natural systems. At the same time, the observer ceases to be an 'observer'—s/he becomes, as Wheeler has said, 'a participant.' Quantum theory has its place in the 'Valley of Astonishment' (one of the seven valleys in *Conference of the Birds*) where contradiction and indeterminacy lie in wait for the traveller.

One could postulate the existence of a *general principle of uncertainty*, active in any process in reality. It is also necessarily active in theatrical space, above all in the relationship between audience and play. In the 'formula' for theatre suggested by Brook ('Theatre = Rra': 'Répétition,' 'représentation,' 'assistance'), the presence—'assistance'—of an audience plays an essential role:

The only thing that all forms of theatre have in common is the need for an audience. This is more than a truism: in the theatre the audience completes the steps of creation.⁵⁶

The audience is part of a much greater unity, subject to the principle of uncertainty: "It is hard to understand the true function of spectator, there and not there, ignored and yet needed. The actor's work is never for an audience, yet it always is for one."⁵⁷ The audience makes itself open to the actors, in its desire to 'see more clearly into itself,'⁵⁸ and so the performance begins to act more fully on the audience. By opening itself up, the audience in turn begins to influence the actors, if the quality of their perception allows interaction. That explains why the global vision of a director can be dissolved by an audience's

presence: the audience exposes the non-conformity of this vision with the structure of the theatrical event. The theatrical event is indeterminate, instantaneous, unpredictable, even if it necessitates the reunion of a set of clearly determined conditions. The director's role consists of working at great length and in detail to prepare the actors, thus enabling the emergence of the theatrical event. All attempts to *anticipate* or *predetermine* the theatrical event are doomed to failure: the director cannot substitute him/herself for the audience. The triangle comprising 'inner life of the actors—their relations with their partners—the audience's consciousness' can only be engendered at the actual moment of performance. The collective entity that is the audience makes the conciliatory element indispensable to the birth of the theatrical event: '(An audience's) true activity can be invisible, but also indivisible.'⁵⁹

However invisible it is, this active participation by the audience is nonetheless material and potent: 'When the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of *King Lear* toured through Europe, the production was steadily improving... The quality of attention that this audience brought expressed itself in silence and concentration: a feeling in the house that affected the actors as though a brilliant light were turned on their work.'⁶⁰ So it is evident why Brook's research work tends towards '... a necessary theatre, one in which there is only a practical difference between actor and audience, not a fundamental one.'⁶¹ The space in which the interaction between audience and actors takes place is infinitely more subtle than that of ideas, concepts, prejudices or preconditioning. The quality of the attention of both audience and actors enables the event to occur as a full manifestation of spontaneity. Ideally this interaction can transcend linguistic and cultural barriers. The C.I.R.T. actors can communicate just as well with African villagers, Australian aborigines or the inhabitants of Brooklyn; 'Theatre isn't about narrative. Narrative isn't necessary. Events will make the whole.'⁶²

Many of the confusions concerning the problem of 'spontaneity' appear to have their source in a linear, mono-dimensional conception of the theatrical event. One can easily believe in the existence of laws such as Zeami's *johakyu*,⁶⁷ but that is insufficient in understanding how a theatrical event can take place through the *transition* between the different elements of *johakyu*. If one limits oneself to a strictly horizontal view of the action of *johakyu* (*jo*, the beginning: *ha*, the development: *kyu*, the ending), it is impossible to understand how one might arrive, for example, at the ultimate refinement of the *ha* part of *ha*, or to a paroxysmic peak in the *kyu* part of *kyu*. What can produce the dynamic 'shocks' necessary for the movement not to stop, not to become blocked? How can the necessary continuity of a theatrical performance be reconciled with the discontinuity inherent in its different components? How can one harmonise the progression of the play, the actors' work and the perception liberated in the audience?

In other words, horizontal movement is meaningless by itself. It remains on the same level forever, no information is forthcoming. This movement only acquires a significance if it is combined with an *evolutionary* dynamic. It is as if each phenomenon in reality were subject, at every moment, to two contradictory movements, in two opposing directions: one ascending, the other descending. As if there were two parallel rivers, flowing with considerable force in two opposing directions: in order to pass from one river to the other, an external intervention—a 'shock'—is absolutely essential. This is where the full richness of the significance of the notion of 'discontinuity' is revealed.

But in order for this ‘shock’ to be effective, a certain concordance or overlap must exist between the ‘shock’ (which in itself is subject to the law of *johakyu*) and the system upon which it is acting. Therefore it becomes clear why each element of *johakyu* must be composed in turn of the three other elements—in other words, why there has to be a *jo-ha-kyu* sequence within the *jo*, the *ha* and the *kyu*. These different components enable interaction between the different systems to take place.

Therefore, in order for a harmonious movement to appear, a new dimension must be present: *johakyu* is not only active horizontally, but also vertically. If each element (*jo*, *ha* and *kyu*) is composed in turn of three other elements, therefore we obtain *nine* elements, two of which represent a sort of ‘interval.’ One of these is filled by the ‘shock’ enabling the horizontal transition to take place, the other by the ‘shock’ enabling the vertical transition to take place. In this way, one ends up with a vision of the action of Zeami’s *johakyu* which is very close to the precise mathematical formulation Gurdjieff elaborated for his ‘law of Seven’ or ‘octave law.’⁶³

When one considers this two-dimensional vision of the action of *johakyu*, Peter Brook’s insistence on the audience’s central role in a theatrical event becomes clearer. The audience can follow the suggestions proposed to it by the playtext, the actors and the director. The first interval—between *jo* and *ha*—can be traversed by means of a more or less automatic exchange, the play can continue its horizontal movement. But the audience also has its own irreducible presence: its culture, its sensitivity, its experience of life, its quality of attention, the intensity of its perception. A ‘resonance’ between the actors’ work and the audience’s inner life can occur. Therefore the theatrical event can appear fully spontaneous, by means of vertical exchange—which implies a certain degree of will and of awareness—thereby leading to something truly new, not pre-existent in theatrical performance. The ascent of the action of *johakyu* towards the play’s summit—the *kyu* of *kyu*—can therefore take place. The second interval is filled by a true ‘shock,’ allowing the paradoxical coexistence of continuity and discontinuity.

We have described what could be considered to be a first level of perception in a theatre event. This analysis could be further refined by taking into account the tree-like structure (it is never ending) of *johakyu*. Different levels of perception, structured hierarchically in a qualitative ‘ladder,’ could be discovered in this way. There are degrees of spontaneity, just as there are degrees of perception. The ‘quality’ of a theatrical performance is determined by the effective presence of these degrees.

We have also referred to a vertical dimension in the action of *johakyu*. This dimension is associated with two possible impulses: one ascending (evolution), the other descending (entropic involution). The ascending curve corresponds to a densification of energy, reflecting the tendency towards unity in diversity and an augmentation of awareness. It is in this sense that we have described the action of *johakyu* until this point.

But one might well conceive of a *johakyu in reverse*, such as appears, for example, in the subject of Peter Brook’s film *Lord of the Flies*, where one witnessed the progressive degradation of a paradise towards a hell. An ideal, innocent space exists nowhere. Left to themselves, without the intervention of ‘conscience’ and ‘awareness,’ the ‘laws of creation’ lead inexorably towards fragmentation, mechanicity,

and, in the final instance, to violence and destruction. In this way spontaneity is metamorphosed into mechanicity.

It should be noted that ‘spontaneity’ and ‘sincerity’ are closely linked. The usual moral connotation of ‘sincerity’ signifies its reduction to an automatic functioning based on a set of ideas and beliefs implanted into the collective psyche in an accidental way through the passage of time. In this sense, ‘sincerity’ comes close to a lie, in relation to itself. By ridding ourselves of the ballast of what does not belong to us, we can eventually become ‘sincere’: recognising laws, seeing oneself, opening oneself to relationships with others. Such a process demands work, a significant degree of effort: ‘sincerity must be learnt.’⁶⁴ In relation to our usual conception of it, this kind of ‘sincerity’ resembles ‘insincerity’: ‘with its moral overtones, the word (sincerity) causes great confusion. In a way, the most powerful feature of the Brecht actors is the degree of their *insincerity*. It is only through detachment that an actor will see his own clichés.’⁶⁵ The actor inhabits a double space of false and true sincerity, the most fruitful movement being an oscillation between the two: ‘The actor is called upon to be completely involved while distanced—detached without detachment. He must be sincere, he must be insincere: he must practice how to be insincere with sincerity and how to lie truthfully. This is almost impossible, but it is essential...’⁶⁶

The actor’s predicament is reminiscent of Arjuna’s perplexity when confronted with the advice that Krishna gives him, in the *Bhagavad Gita*, to reconcile action and non-action: paradoxically, action undertaken with understanding becomes intertwined with inaction.

At every moment, the actor is confronted with a choice between acting and not-acting, between an action visible to the audience and an invisible action, linked to his/her inner life. Zeami drew our attention to the importance of intervals of non-interpretation or ‘*non-action*,’ separating a pair of gestures, actions or movements:

It is a spiritual concentration which will allow you to remain on your guard, retaining all of your attention, at that moment when you stop dancing or chanting, or in any other circumstances during an *interval* in the text or in the mimic art. The emotion created by this inner spiritual concentration—which manifests itself externally—is what produces *interest* and enjoyment... It is in relation to the degree of *non-consciousness* and selflessness, through a mental attitude in which one’s spiritual reality is hidden even from oneself, that one must forge the link between what precedes and what follows the intervals of *non-action*. This is what constitutes the inner strength which can serve to reunite all ten thousand means of expression in the oneness of the spirit.⁶⁷

It is only by mastering the attitudes and associations produced in this way that the actor can truly ‘play parts,’ putting him/herself in others’ places. ‘At every moment,’ wrote Gurdjieff, ‘associations change automatically, one evoking another, and so on. If I am in the process of playing a part, I must be in control all the time. It is impossible to start again with the given impulse.’⁶⁸ In a sense a free man is one who can truly ‘play parts.’

In the light of all that has been said so far in this essay, would it not now be possible to state that there is a very strong relationship between theatrical and spiritual work? Whether one agrees or not, a clear and important distinction between theatre research and traditional research must be made in order to avoid the source of an indefinite chain of harmful confusions, which in any case have already coloured certain endeavours in the modern theatre.

Traditional research addresses itself to man as a whole, calling into play a wide range of aspects, infinitely richer than that of theatre research: after all, the latter's end is aesthetic. Traditional research is closely linked with an oral teaching, untranslatable into ordinary language. Isn't it significant that no traditional writings ever describe the process of self-initiation? In his 'Third Series,' faced with the impossibility of the task, Gurdjieff preferred to destroy his manuscript—what was eventually published as *Life is real only then, when 'I am'* is only a collection of fragments from that manuscript. On several occasions, Saint John of the Cross announced a treatise on the 'mystical union,' but no trace has ever been found of such a work. Finally, 'Attar devoted the major part of his poem *Conference of the Birds* to the story of the discussions between the birds and a description of the preparation for their journey: the journey itself and the meeting with the Simorgh only take up a few lines.

Theatre research clearly has another end in mind: art, theatre. Peter Brook himself has strongly emphasised the need for such a distinction: '*theatre work is not a substitute for a spiritual search.*'⁶⁹ In itself the theatrical experience is insufficient to transform the life of an actor. Nevertheless, like a savant, for example, or indeed any human being, the actor can experience *fleetingly* what could be 'a higher level of evolution.' Theatre is an imitation of life, but an imitation based upon the concentration of energies released in the creation of a theatre event. So one can become aware, on an experiential level, of the full richness of the present moment. If theatre is not really the decisive meeting with oneself and with others, it nonetheless allows for a certain degree of exploration to take place.

This fundamental ambiguity recurs in Grotowski's approach, at least such as it is described by Brook: 'The theatre, he believes, cannot be an end in itself: like dancing or music in certain dervish orders, the theatre is a vehicle, a means for self-study, self-exploration...'⁷⁰ According to Brook's conception of the theatre, it cannot lay claim to unity, in terms of its end. Of course one can arrive at certain privileged moments; 'At certain moments, this fragmented world comes together, and for a certain time it can rediscover the marvel of organic life. The marvel of being one.'⁷¹ But theatre work is ephemeral, subject to the influences (both evolved and involuted) of the environment. This impermanence prevents it from leading to 'points of dynamic concentration.' In answer to a question about *Orghast*, Brook replied that theatre work is:

... self destructive within waves... You go through lines and points. The line that has gone through *Orghast* should come to a point, and the point should be a work ... obviously there is a necessary crystallising of the work into a concentrated form. It's always about that—coming to points of concentration.⁷²

On the Possibility of a Universal Language

When A.C.H. Smith asked him about the possibility of a ‘universal language,’ Peter Brook dismissed the question as being meaningless.⁷³ His response reflects a fear of the stifling of a vital question by endless theoretical considerations, by deforming and maiming abstractions. How many prejudices and clichés are unleashed automatically simply by pronouncing the two words ‘universal language’? And yet Brook’s entire work testifies to his search for a new language which endeavours to unite sound, gesture and word, and in this way to free meanings which could not be expressed in any other way. But above all this research is experimental: something living emerges into the theatre space, and it matters little what name one gives to it. ‘What happens,’ Brook asks, ‘when gesture and sound turn into word? What is the exact place of the word in theatrical expression? As vibration? Concept? Music? Is any evidence buried in the structure of certain ancient languages?’⁷⁴

The fact that, by themselves, words cannot provide total access to reality has been well known for a long time. In the final analysis, any definition of words by words is based on indefinite terms. Where does linguistic determinism begin, and where does it end? Can it be characterised by a single value, by a finite number of values or by an infinite number? And if, according to Korzybski’s famous phrase, ‘the map is not the territory,’⁷⁵ it nevertheless has the considerable advantage of a structure similar to that of the territory. How can this similarity become operative? The word is a small visible portion of a gigantic unseen formation,’ writes Brook.⁷⁶ Starting with this ‘small visible portion,’ how can one gain access to the ‘gigantic formation’ of the universe as a whole? A theatrical event, as has already been suggested, determines the appearance of a ladder structure of different levels of perception. How can any single word encapsulate the sum of these levels?

The relativisation of perception has enabled us to specify a phenomenon’s place in reality, as well as how it is linked to the rest. A word, a gesture, an action are all linked to a certain level of perception, but, in the true theatrical event, they are also linked to other levels present in the event. Relativity allows us to uncover the *invariance* concealed behind the multiplicity of forms of phenomena in different systems of reference. This vision of things is close to that implied by the ‘principle of relativity’ formulated by Gurdjieff.⁷⁷

Relativity conditions vision: without relativity there can be no vision. The playwright who takes his/her own reality for reality as a whole presents an image of a desiccated and dead world, in spite of any ‘originality’ that he/she might have shown. ‘Unfortunately the playwright rarely searches to relate their detail to any larger structure—it is as though they accept without question their intuition as complete, their reality as all of reality.’⁷⁸ Death itself can be relativised in an acceptance of contradiction. Brook cites the example of Chekhov: ‘In Chekhov’s work, death is omnipresent... But he learnt how to balance compassion with distance... This awareness of death, and of the precious moments that could be lived, endow his work with a sense of the relative: in other words, a viewpoint from which the tragic is always a bit absurd.’⁷⁹ Non-identification is another word for vision.

Theatre work can be the constant search for a simultaneous perception, by both actors and audience, of every level present in an event. Brook describes his own research in this concise formulation:

... the simple relationship of movement and sound that passes directly, and the single element which has the ambiguity and density that permits it to be read simultaneously on a multitude of levels—those are the two points that the research is all about.⁸⁰

The principle of relativity clarifies what an eventual ‘universal language’ could be. For Gurdjieff, this new, precise, mathematical language had to be centered around the idea of evolution: ‘The fundamental property of this new language is that *all* ideas are concentrated around *one single* idea: in other words, they are all considered, in terms of their mutual relationships, from the point of view of a single idea. And this idea is that of *evolution*. Not at all in the sense of a *mechanical* evolution, naturally, because that does not exist, but in the sense of a conscious and voluntary evolution. It is the only possible kind... The language which permits understanding is based on the knowledge of its place in the evolutionary ladder.’⁸¹ So the *sacred* itself could be understood to be anything that is linked to an evolutionary process.

This new language involves the participation of body and emotions. Human beings in their totality, as an image of reality, could therefore forge a new language. We do not only live in the world of action and reaction, but also in that of spontaneity and of self-conscious thought.

Traditional symbolic language prefigures this new language. When talking about different systems which convey the idea of unity, Gurdjieff said:

A symbol can never be taken in a definitive and exclusive sense. In so far as it express the laws of unity in indefinite diversity, a symbol itself possesses an indefinite number of aspects from which it can be considered, and it demands from whoever approaches it the capacity to see it from different points of view. Symbols that are transposed into the words of ordinary language harden, become less clear: they can quite easily become their own opposites, imprisoning meaning within dogmatic and narrow frame-works, without even permitting the relative freedom of a logical examination of the subject. Reason merely provides a literal understanding of symbols, only ever attributing to them a single meaning.⁸²

The fact that a symbol possesses an indefinite number of aspects does not mean that it is imprecise at all. Indeed it is its reading on an indefinite number of levels which confers on it its extreme precision. Commenting on the theatre of Samuel Beckett, Brook writes:

Beckett’s plays are symbols in an exact sense of the word. A false symbol is soft and vague: a true symbol is hard and clear. When we say ‘symbolic’ we often mean something drearily obscure: a true symbol is specific, it is the only form a certain truth can take... We get nowhere if we expect to be told what they mean, yet each one has a relation with us we

can't deny. If we accept this, the symbol opens in us a great wondering O.⁸³

It is clear therefore why Brook believes Chekhov's essential quality to be 'precision,' and why he states that today '... fidelity is the central concern, an approach which necessitates weighing every single word and bringing it into sharp focus.'⁸⁴ Only then can words have an influence: they can become active, bearers of real significance, if the actor behaves as a 'medium,' allowing words to act through and 'colour' him/her, rather than him/her trying to manipulate them.⁸⁵

By forgetting relativity, language has become in time inevitably narrower, diminished in its emotional and even intellectual capacities. It has been necessarily 'bastardised': one word is taken for another, one meaning for another. The *Orghast* experiment showed in a startling way that a return to an *organic* language, detached from the dread bonding of abstraction to abstraction, is possible. Words invented by the poet Ted Hughes and fragments performed in different ancient languages acted as catalysts to the reciprocal transformation between movement and sound, as an expression of an inner state, meaning no longer needing to be filtered solely through cerebral activity. In an interview with *American Theatre*, Brook emphasised that 'actors, whatever their origin, can play intuitively a work in its original language. This simple principle is the most unusual thing that exists in the theatre...'⁸⁶

Evidently the relativisation of perception demands hard work, a considerable effort, an inner *silence* that is a sort of penitence. Silence plays an integral part in Brook's work, beginning with the research into the inter-relationship of silence and duration with his Theatre of Cruelty group in 1964, and culminating in the rhythm punctuated with silences that is indefinitely present at the core of his film *Meetings with Remarkable Men*: 'In silence there are many potentialities: chaos or order, muddle or pattern, all lie fallow—the invisible-made-visible is of sacred nature...'⁸⁷ Silence is all-embracing, and it contains countless 'layers.'⁸⁸

One could suggest that events and silence constitute the fabric of any theatre performance. Silence comes at the end of action, as in *Conference of the Birds*: 'A beautiful symbolic opposition is drawn between the black of the mourning material and the hues of the puppets. Colour disappears, all sparkle is suppressed, silence is established,' observes Georges Banu.⁸⁹ The richness of silence confuses, embarrasses and disturbs, and yet it is joy that is hidden within it, that 'strange irrational joy' that Brook detected in the plays of Samuel Beckett.⁹⁰

It is no coincidence that the words 'empty space' form the title of one of the two books on theatre Brook has ever published. One must create an emptiness, a silence within oneself, in order to permit the growth of reality's full potentiality. This is what Tradition has always taught us.

Is silence the premonitory sign of a true 'universal language'? In a passage in *The Empty Space*, Brook writes '... everything is a language for something and nothing is a language for everything.'⁹¹ Is this 'nothing'—'formless,' 'bottomless,' as Jacob Böhme called it—the basis of all form, process and event? And how can one reconcile this infinitely rich, formless silence with aesthetic form, other than through

incessant search, continual investigation and pitiless questioning, relentlessly pursued along a cutting edge? Perhaps it is above all ‘tightropes’ that are missing from contemporary artistic research:

We can try to capture the invisible, but we must not lose touch with common sense... The model as always is Shakespeare. His aim continually is holy, metaphysical, yet he never makes the mistake of staying too long on the highest plane. He knew how hard it is for us to keep company with the absolute—so he continually bumps us down to earth... We have to accept that we can never see all of the invisible. So after straining towards it, we have to face defeat, drop down to earth, then start up again.⁹²

Peter Brook is the only one to follow the path he has chosen. On such a path, there can be neither ‘sources’ nor absolute ‘models.’

If one accepts Korzybski’s suggestion,⁹³ the history of human thought can be roughly divided into three periods, adopting as the basis for classification the relationship between the observer and what is observed. In the first period (‘pre-scientific’), the observer is everything, while what is being observed has little or no importance. In the second period (‘classical’ or ‘semi-scientific’), what is observed comprises the only important aspect: this ‘classical’ materialist tendency continues to dominate most areas of concern today. Finally, in the third period (‘scientific’—still embryonic at the present time), a period in which Peter Brook seems to us to be one of the boldest explorers, gradually it becomes clear that knowledge results from a unity between the observer and what is observed. An encounter with Tradition can only enrich and ennoble this conception of unity. For the theatre, such a meeting is not abstract or intellectual, but experimental. One could even suggest that theatre is a privileged field of study of Tradition.

At the end of this essay, perhaps one must confess that it seems impossible to approach Brook’s theatre work from a theoretical point of view. All that we can offer is a ‘reading,’ one of a multitude of other possibilities. In *The Empty Space*, Brook writes:

Most of what is called theatre anywhere in the world is a travesty of a word once full of sense. War or peace, the colossal bandwagon of culture trundles on, carrying each artist’s traces to the evermounting garbage heap... We are too busy to ask the only vital question which measures the whole structure: why theatre at all? What for?... Has the stage a real place in our lives? What function can it have? What could it serve?⁹⁴

The question is still being asked.

Notes

¹ *Petit Robert*, Paris, S.N.L., 1970, p. 1810.

² Peter Brook in Gérard Montassier, *Le Fait Culturel*, Paris, Fayard, 1980, p. 121.

- ³ *Petit Robert*, op. cit., p. 1810.
- ⁴ Peter Brook in *Le Fait Culturel*, op. cit., p. 122.
- ⁵ P.D. Ouspensky, *Fragments d'un enseignement inconnu* (hereafter *Fragments ...*), Paris, Stock, 1978, p. 393. Published in English as *In Search of the Miraculous*, this remains the most thorough and illuminating introduction to Gurdjieff's thought. For a study of the relationship between Gurdjieff and contemporary scientific thought, see Basarab Nicolescu, 'G.I. Gurdjieff,' in *Encyclopédie des Sciences Esotériques*, Paris, Quillet, 1985.
- ⁶ Basarab Nicolescu, 'Physique contemporain et Tradition occidentale,' in *3ème Millénaire* no. 2, May/June 1982, pp. 4–13.
- ⁷ Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1977, p. 58.
- ⁸ Peter Brook, *ibid.*, p. 64.
- ⁹ A.G.H. Smith, *Orghast at Persepolis*, London, Eyre Methuen, 1972, p. 257.
- ¹⁰ John Heilpern, *Conference of the Birds: The Story of Peter Brook in Africa*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1979, p. 103.
- ¹¹ Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*, op. cit., p. 79.
- ¹² G.I. Gurdjieff, *Gurdjieff parle à ses élèves*, Paris, Stock/Monde ouvert, 1980, p. 35.
- ¹³ P.D. Ouspensky, *Fragments...*, op. cit., p. 133.
- ¹⁴ Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*, op. cit., p. 13.
- ¹⁵ Ervin Laszlo, *Le systémisme—vision nouvelle du monde*, Paris, Pergamon Press, 1981, p. 59. This is an excellent introduction to systems theory.
- ¹⁶ Peter Brook, *Le Fait Culturel*, op. cit., p. 111
- ¹⁷ G.I. Gurdjieff, *Récits de Belzébuth à son petit-fils*, Monaco, Rocher/Littérature, Vol. I, pp. 84, 166, 167, 254.
- ¹⁸ See A.C.H. Smith, *Orghast at Persepolis*, op. cit.: John Heilpern, *Conference of the Birds*, op. cit.: Michel Rostain, 'Journal des répétitions de *La Tragédie de Carmen*' in *Les Voies de la Création Théâtrale*, Vol. XIII, Peter Brook, Paris, Editions de C.N.R.S., 1985.
- ¹⁹ Peter Brook in the programme for *La Conférence des Oiseaux*, Paris, C.I.C.T. 1979, p. 75.
- ²⁰ A.C.H. Smith, *Orghast at Persepolis*, op. cit., p. 33.
- ²¹ Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*, op. cit., p. 127.
- ²² Alfred Korzybski, *Science and Sanity*, Lakeville, Connecticut, The International Non-Aristotelian Library Publishing Co., 1958, p. 161.
- ²³ A.C.H. Smith, *Orghast at Persepolis*, op. cit., p. 255.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 123.
- ²⁵ Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*, op. cit., p. 128.
- ²⁶ See for example Stéphane Lupasco, *Les Troil Matières*, Strasbourg, Coherence, 1982.
- ²⁷ Farid ud-Din 'Attar, *Conference of the Birds*, Boulder, Shambhala, 1971, pp. 4–6: translation by C. S. Nott.
- ²⁸ G.I. Gurdjieff, *Récits de Belzébuth à son petit-fils*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 14–15.
- ²⁹ See, for example, articles in the review *3ème Millénaire*, nos. 1-2, 1982, and no. 7, 1983.
- ³⁰ John Heilpern, *Conference of the Birds*, op. cit., p. 136.

- 31 Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*, op. cit., p. 14–15.
- 32 Ibid., p. 124.
- 33 Charles S. Pierce, *Ecrits sur le signe*, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1978, pp. 23–24.
- 34 Ibid., p. 22.
- 35 Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*, op. cit., p. 111.
- 36 Peter Brook in the programme for *La Cerisaie*, Paris, C.I.C.T., 1981, p. 109.
- 37 Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*, op. cit., p. 18.
- 38 Peter Brook, interviewed by Ronald Hayman, *The Times*, 29 August 1970.
- 39 Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*, op. cit., p. 40.
- 40 Stéphane Lupasco, *Les trois matières*, op. cit., p. 138.
- 41 Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*, op. cit., p. 65.
- 42 Ibid., p. 98.
- 43 Ibid., p. 96.
- 44 Ibid., p. 105.
- 45 Zeami, *La tradition secrète de No.*, Paris, Gallimard, 1960, p. 77.
- 46 See for example John Heilpern, *Conference of the Birds*, op. cit., pp. 120–21.
- 47 Peter Brook in *Le Fait Culturel*, op. cit., pp. 115–16.
- 48 John Heilpern, *Conference of the Birds*, op. cit., p. 69.
- 49 A.C.H. Smith, *Orghast at Persepolis*, op. cit., p. 250.
- 50 Peter Brook *The Empty Space*, op. cit., pp. 12–13.
- 51 Ibid., p. 132.
- 52 P.D. Ouspensky, *Fragments...*, op. cit., pp. 275–77
- 53 For a fuller description of such exercises, see Michel Rostain, ‘Journal des répétitions de *La Tragédie de Carmen*’ op. cit.
- 54 John Heilpern, *Conference of the Birds*, op. cit., p. 50.
- 55 A.C.H. Smith, *Orghast at Persepolis*, op. cit., p. 108.
- 56 Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1977, p. 154.
- 57 Ibid., p. 142. (English translator’s note: On a literal level, the three French words in Brook’s formula above mean rehearsal, performance and attendance, although they also suggest some of the connotations the same words have in English, e.g. rehearsal as an unglamorous repetitive process, performance as representation, etc. Brook plays on this tension.)
- 58 Ibid., p. 57.
- 59 Ibid., p. 152.
- 60 Ibid., p. 144.
- 61 Ibid., p. 25.
- 62 Ibid., p. 150.
- 63 John Heilpern, *Conference of the Birds, The Story of Peter Brook in Africa*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1979, p. 165. According to Gurdjieff, the number of fundamental laws, which regulate every process in the world and in mankind, is very restricted. In his cosmology, the fundamental laws are the ‘law of

Three' and 'the law of Seven,' described in exhaustive detail in P.D. Ouspensky's *Fragments d'un enseignement inconnu*, Paris, Stock, 1978.

⁶⁴ P.D. Ouspensky, *Fragments...*, op. cit., p. 216.

⁶⁵ Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*, op. cit., p. 130.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 131.

⁶⁷ Zeami, *La tradition secrète du No*, Paris, Gallimard, 1960, p. 131. (Translator's note: Perhaps the most useful of English translations available, both in this instance and elsewhere, is *On the Art of the No Drama: The Major Treatises of Zeami*, translated by J. Thomas Rimer and Yamazaki Masakazu, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1984. See 'Connecting all the arts through one intensity of mind,' from 'A mirror held to the Flower,' p. 230, 96–97).

⁶⁸ G. I. Gurdjieff, *Gurdjieff parle à ses élèves*, Paris, Stock/Monde ouverte, 1980, p. 230.

⁶⁹ A.C.H. Smith, *Orghast at Persepolis*, London, Eyre Methuen, 1972, p. 251.

⁷⁰ Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*, op. cit., p. 66.

⁷¹ A.C.H. Smith, *Orghast at Persepolis*, op. cit., p. 52.

⁷² Ibid., p. 264.

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 255–256

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 42.

⁷⁵ Alfred Korzybski, *Science and Sanity*, Lakeville, Connecticut, The International Non-Aristotelian Publishing Co., 1958, p. 58.

⁷⁶ Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*, op. cit., p.15.

⁷⁷ P. D. Ouspensky, *Fragments...*, op. cit., p. 111.

⁷⁸ Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*, op. cit., p. 40.

⁷⁹ Peter Brook, in the programme for *La Cerisaie*, Paris, C.I.C.T., 1981, p. 110.

⁸⁰ A.C.H. Smith, *Orghast at Persepolis*, op. cit., p. 248.

⁸¹ P.D. Ouspensky, *Fragments...*, op. cit., p. 112.

⁸² Ibid., pp. 400–401.

⁸³ Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*, op. cit., pp. 64–65.

⁸⁴ Peter Brook, in the programme for *La Cerisaie*, op. cit., pp. 107–108

⁸⁵ A. C. H. Smith, *Orghast at Persepolis*, op. cit., p. 27.

⁸⁶ Peter Brook, interview published in *American Theatre, 1970–1971*: quoted in A.C.H. Smith *Orghast at Persepolis*, op. cit., p. 40.

⁸⁷ Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*, op. cit., p. 64.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 29.

⁸⁹ Georges Banu, 'La Conférence des Oiseaux, ou le chemin vers soi-même,' in *Les Voies de La Création Théâtrale*, Vol. X, Paris, C.N.R.S., 1982, p. 285.

⁹⁰ Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*, op. cit., p. 66.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 133.

⁹² Ibid., p. 69.

⁹³ Alfred Korzybski, *Science and Sanity*, op. cit., p. 99.

⁹⁴ Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*, op. cit., pp. 45–46.

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[Prof. Basarab Nicolescu](#) is a quantum physicist, working in the theory of elementary particles at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, University of Paris 6. He is the author of a hundred scientific articles published in many specialized international journals, as well as the author of several books of general transdisciplinary interest such as *Science, Meaning and Evolution—The Cosmology of Jacob Boehme* (Parabola Books, New York, 1991) and *Manifesto of Transdisciplinarity* (SUNY Press, New York).

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[Editorial Introduction](#)

It is our whim to make this the best general website available on Gurdjieff. Lest you misinterpret our intention or 'whim' as flippant and frivolous, please let us share one of our favorite anecdotes...

[G. Gurdjieff's Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man](#) [Sample Only]

Excerpts from Prospectus
Number 1. Fontainebleau:
Privately printed, 1923, issued in
English, French and German,
15p. (An original copy of this
document can be examined in
The Heap-Reynolds 'Little
Review Collection' at The
University of Delaware Library.
Sub-series F 21, 1926.)
Beginning in the Spring of 1923,
Gurdjieff's students were given a
prospectus for the *Institute for
the Harmonious Development of*



*The first succeeding generation
began ... to superwisacre so
thoroughly that there reached the
beings of the third and fourth
generations nothing else but what
our Honorable Mullah Nassr
Eddin defines by the words: 'only
information about its specific
smell.'*

G. I. Gurdjieff

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Man that was also distributed to the public at movements demonstrations in Paris. It was the first statement about his past and ideas that Gurdjieff published in Europe.

[Sayings of Gurdjieff](#)

More aphorisms and sayings of Gurdjieff as documented by Kenneth Walker in his book, *A Study of Gurdjieff's Teaching*.

[Gurdjieff: The Unknown Teacher](#)

[Sample Only]

A previously unpublished essay by John G. Bennett and published with the permission of George Bennett. Taken from a typescript written in 1949. Bennett's essays of this period, written when he was in contact with Gurdjieff during the last years of Gurdjieff's life, have a distinctive balance and intensity that sets them apart. Begins with descriptions of Bennett's meetings with Gurdjieff and Ouspensky and his conviction that at last he had found "a comprehensive and convincing world outlook."

[Gurdjieff Chronology](#)

Chronology reproduced from *Gurdjieff: the Anatomy of a Myth* (Element Books Ltd 1991,

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Gurdjieff: An Original Teacher

[Sample Only]

An abridgement of this introduction to and short biography of Gurdjieff, written by J. Walter Driscoll and George Baker, was published in *Gurdjieff: an annotated bibliography*.

Lord Pentland

A brief sketch of John Pentland's life and writings by J. Walter Driscoll. Pentland was a pupil of both P. D. and Mme. Ouspensky for many years during the 1930s and 1940s. He spent considerable time with Gurdjieff in 1949, after which he led the Gurdjieff Work in North America.

Gurdjieff

International
Review

Home

Editor's Note

Latest Issue

▶ Past Issues

▶ His Writings

His Pupils

Movements

The Music

Group Work

▶ Books

About this Site

Contact Us

Online Store

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Gurdjieff

International Review

Fall 2000 Issue, Vol. IV No. 1

Our eleventh issue continues our recognition of the 50th year since Gurdjieff's death in Paris on

October 29, 1949. We focus on Gurdjieff himself, on his writings, and we also include several articles on prominent pupils. All back issues are available in their entirety as [printed copies](#).

[Editorial: Working with Others](#)

Anyone who wishes to engage in the practical study of Gurdjieff's teaching is likely to find the task of finding guidance to be a challenging exercise in discrimination.

[People Who Hunger and Thirst for Truth](#)

Gurdjieff discusses the obstacles and deceptions faced by anyone in search of inner truth and spiritual guidance. First published in *Views from the Real World: Early Talks of Gurdjieff*, pp. 50–51, 56–58, New York: Dutton, London: Routledge & Kegan.

[Excerpts from the Talks and Writings of G. I. Gurdjieff](#)

These excerpts on Art, Music and Movement were previously published as part of a program booklet issued for the "Ideas of Gurdjieff Conference" sponsored by the Far West Institute in San Rafael, California in November 1996 and are reproduced with their kind permission.



Gurdjieff arriving in New York, S.S.
Paris, January 13, 1924

This briefly is the state of things in the realm of self-knowledge: in order to do you must know; but to know you must find out how to know. We cannot find this out by ourselves.

G. I. Gurdjieff

You have to be two to make a poem. The one who speaks is the mother, the poem is the egg, and the one who listens is he who fertilizes the egg.

René Daumal

We all carry a question: Why am I living? In the substratum of everyone's being we all come to it, have to confront it. Experiencing the swings between moments of happiness and misery, questions appear.

William Segal

For me there are no answers,

The Old Man and the Children of the Age

[Sample Only]

An unusual convergence of literary merit and heartfelt experience, these essays by Pierre Schaeffer were first published in the anthology *Gurdjieff*, edited by Louis Pauwels in 1954.

These excerpts comprise a few jewels from a collection of articles that are often murky and misleading. Therein, Pauwels mixes his notions of the occult and politics to brew conspiracy theories. He casts Gurdjieff as “scandalous” and possibly (Pauwels is never sure) a Black Magician. The original French edition appeared in 1954 when it was virtually the only book available about Gurdjieff in that language.

Pauwels later reconsidered and came to recognize that the Gurdjieff teaching was one of the most important and positive elements in his life.

Getting in Touch with Gurdjieff

[Sample Only]

First published in *The New York Times Magazine*, July 29, 1979, Margaret Croyden’s article provides a series of penetrating discussions about Gurdjieff with Jeanne de Salzmann, John Pentland, Michel de Salzmann, Henri Tracol and P. L. Travers.

A Conversation on Meetings with Remarkable Men

[Sample Only]

A deeply considered conversation between Roy Finch, John Pentland, and Lawrence Morris on the book *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, three years after its English publication; first published in *The Exacting Ear: The Story of Listener Sponsored Radio and an Anthology of Programs* edited by Eleanor McKinney, New York: Random House, 1966.

The Holy War

only questions, and I am grateful that the questions go on and on. I don’t look for an answer, because I don’t think there is one. I’m very glad to be the bearer of a question.

P. L. Travers

As for putting him [Gurdjieff] on a pedestal, especially after his death, that is the most sinister trick that well-meaning Gurdjieffians could possibly play on him. That is to show true disrespect.

Pierre Schaeffer

One of the most interesting things about the book [Meetings with Remarkable Men] is the passionate quality of this search—the fact that this man persists—keeps looking—keeps traveling, as it were. One has to regard it, I suppose, on that level, as a kind of a spiritual pilgrimage as well as a factual account.

Roy Finch

He [Christopher Fremantle] showed us in many practical ways that the possibility of inner development lay in a more unified attention. When the attention is concentrated in a special way ... it connects our diverse selves to create a new state in which one may experience a meeting between one’s subjectivity and objective reality.

Lillian Firestone

René Daumal's prose-poem that heralds a fiery call to inner warfare is translated by D. M. Dooling from "La Guerre Sainte," in Daumal's collection, *Poésie Noire, Poésie Blanche*.

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October 1, 2000

[Commentary on "The Holy War"](#)

[Sample Only]

Kathleen Rosenblatt's commentary provides an exquisite setting for Daumal's fierce prose-poem, "The Holy War."

[For William Segal \(1904–2000\)](#)

William Segal, a long time student of Gurdjieff, died on May 16th of this year. David Appelbaum's compact, articulate eulogy celebrates the multi-faceted life of William Segal as a philosopher, business-man, artist and spiritual teacher.

[Wm. Segal](#)

William Segal illuminates an exceptional array of topics, especially self-transformation, in this interview with Daniel Hess which was first published in the *Shambhala Sun*, November–December 1992.

[In Light of Meaning](#) [An Interview with William Segal](#)

[Sample Only]

In this 1995 interview, William Segal and David Appelbaum discuss uses of language and demonstrate that quality of attention and an inner presence are essential elements in the art of communication. First published in *Parabola*, Vol. XX, No. 3, New York, and is reprinted with their kind permission.

[Christopher Fremantle](#) [\(1906–1978\)](#)

This introduction to Christopher Fremantle by Lillian Firestone was first published in Fremantle's posthumous *On Attention: talks, essays and letters to his pupils*. She describes Fremantle's life and almost thirty years of work with pupils in America and Mexico.

Ouspensky

[Sample Only]

Christopher Fremantle—a former pupil of Peter Ouspensky—provides an informed synopsis of Ouspensky's importance as a philosopher and exponent of Gurdjieff's teaching.

A Theatre for Us

[Sample Only]

Orage adopts Gurdjieff's metaphor of the human psyche as a three-storied factory and proposes the idea of a three-storied stage set that would thus depict the basic facts of human psychology. First published in *The Little Review*, New York, Vol. X (2), Winter 1926.

Mr. Nyland and the Piano

Composer Terry Winter Owens describes what occurred when Willem Nyland asked her to go examine a Steinway grand piano that Timothy Leary had offered as a gift in the early 1960s.

Biblio-Trove: Treasures for the Mind and Spirit

J. Walter Driscoll offers books new and old but not just another book dealership. Specializing in Gurdjieff and stocking discoveries from his research for the next Gurdjieff bibliography, he offers all the nearly 100 books described in [*Gurdjieff: a Reading Guide*](#) as well as free searches and quality literature on diverse topics.

[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Gurdjieff's Temple Dances

by [John G. Bennett](#)



Constantinople 1920

Gurdjieff said, “Change depends on you, and it will not come about through study. You can know everything and yet remain where you are. It is like a man who knows all about money and the laws of banking, but has no money of his own in the bank. What does all his knowledge do for him?”

Here Gurdjieff suddenly changed his manner of speaking, and looking at me very directly he said: “You have the possibility of changing, but I must warn you that it will not be easy. You are still full of the idea that you can do what you like. In spite of all your study of free will and determinism, you have not yet understood that so long as you remain in this place, you can do nothing at all. Within this sphere there is no freedom. Neither your knowledge nor all your activity will give you freedom. This is because you have no ...” Gurdjieff found it difficult to express what he wanted in Turkish. He used the word *varlik*, which means roughly the quality of being present. I thought he was referring to the experience of being separated from one's body.

Neither I nor the Prince [Sabaheddin] could understand what Gurdjieff wished to convey. I felt sad, because his manner of speaking left me in no doubt that he was telling me something of great importance. I answered, rather lamely, that I knew that knowledge was not enough, but what else was there to do but study? He did not answer me directly, but without giving any impression of ignoring me, began to speak to the Prince about Temple Dances and their importance for the study of ancient wisdom. He invited the three of us to see a demonstration of Temple Dances by a group of pupils whom he had brought with him from Tiflis.

We drove Gurdjieff back to the Grande Rue de Péra, where he said he had an appointment at midnight, which seemed odd. He repeated his invitation to Yemenedji Sokak for the following Saturday.

The Prince did not wish to go. Indeed, he never went out at night on any pretext. Mrs. Beaumont and I made our way to Yemenedji Sokak at nine p.m. as directed. When we arrived the only occupant of the long room was a tall man in a white costume and a yellow sash, who was standing in a corner with his back to the room and slowly nodding his head backwards and forwards. Others, both men and women, came into the room. All were wearing white costumes. Both men and women wore tunics buttoned up to the neck. The men had loose white trousers and the women wore white skirts over white pantaloons. No one spoke or took any notice of the others. Some sat cross-legged on the floor, others began to practice various postures and rhythms.

Chairs were arranged at one end, and two or three visitors entered and sat down. To our immense astonishment, we saw Ouspensky come into the room, looking neither right nor left and appearing not to recognize us. Soon afterwards Thomas de Hartmann came in and sat down at the piano. I had not suspected that either of them was connected to Gurdjieff.

Gurdjieff himself came in soon after. He was dressed in black. As soon as he entered, all the performers stood up and arranged themselves in six lines. They wore different colored sashes, and I expected to see them arranged according to the colours of the spectrum, but for some reason the red was in the wrong place.

Hartmann began playing. The first dance was accompanied by a magnificent slow theme that was more like a Greek anthem than an Eastern temple dance. The dance itself was very simple—almost like Swedish gymnastics. Each dance lasted only one or two minutes. The action grew more and more intense. After a time, the straight lines were broken up and the performers placed themselves in some intricate pattern. Before the dance began, one of the men said in English: “The exercise that will follow represents the Initiation of a Priestess. It comes from a cave temple in the Hindu Kush.” This was the most impressive and moving event of the evening. The exercise lasted much longer than the others. The part of the priestess, who scarcely moved at all, was taken by a tall and very beautiful woman. The expression of her face conveyed the feeling of complete withdrawal from the outer world. She seemed unaware of the complicated weaving movements of the men and women surrounding her. I had never before seen such a beautiful dance, or heard such strangely disturbing music.

After the Initiation of the Priestess, there were several exercises for men only. Then everyone lined up at the back of the room while Hartmann played a series of chords. Gurdjieff shouted an order in Russian and all the dancers jumped in the air and rushed at full speed towards the spectators. Suddenly Gurdjieff in a loud voice shouted “Stop!” and everyone froze in his tracks. Most of the dancers, being carried by the momentum of their rush, fell and rolled over and over on the floor. As they came to rest they became rigid like people in a cataleptic trance. There was a long silence. Gurdjieff gave another order and all quietly got up and resumed their places in the original ranks. The exercise was repeated two or three times, but the impact on us was no longer the same...

Fontainebleau 1923

Every evening after dinner, a new life began. There was no hurry. Some walked in the garden. Others smoked. About nine o'clock we made our way alone or in twos and threes to the Study House. Outdoor shoes came off and soft shoes or moccasins were put on. We sat quietly, each on his or her own cushion, round the floor in the centre. Men sat on the right, women on the left; never together.

Some went straight on to the stage and began to practice the rhythmic exercises. On our first arrival, each of us had the right to choose his own teacher for the movements. I had chosen Vasili Ferapontoff, a young Russian, tall, with a sad studious face. He wore pince-nez, and looked the picture of the perpetual student, Trofimov, in *The Cherry Orchard*. He was a conscientious instructor, though not a brilliant performer. I came to value his friendship, which continued until his premature death ten years later. He told me in one of our first conversations that he expected to die young.

The exercises were much the same as those I had seen in Constantinople three years before. The new pupils, such as myself, began with the series called Six Obligatory Exercises. I found them immensely exciting, and worked hard to master them quickly so that I could join in the work of the general class.

At that time, Gurdjieff was preparing a special class—composed almost exclusively of Russians—to give public demonstrations. The general class could learn any new exercises, but did not take part in the special training reserved for the demonstration class.

Gurdjieff's method of creating new exercises had a living spontaneity that was one secret of his success as a teacher. While the new pupils were practicing on the stage, some of the Russians would gather round the piano, where Thomas de Hartmann sat with his bald head perked like a bird. Gurdjieff would begin to tap a rhythm on the piano top. When it was clear to all, he hummed a melody or played it with one hand on the piano and then walked away. Hartmann would develop a theme to fit the rhythm and the melody. If he went wrong, Gurdjieff would shout at him and Hartmann would shout furiously back.

Then the older class would line up in rows, and we would stand at the side and watch, or go back to our places on the floor. Gurdjieff would teach the postures and gestures of the exercises partly by doing them himself; or, if they were complicated, involving different movements by different rows or positions, he would walk round and place each pupil in the desired posture. There would be vehement arguments. The

stage became a chaos of dispute, gesticulation and shouting as the pupils tried to work out the sequence required. Suddenly, Gurdjieff would give a peremptory shout and there would be a dead silence. A few words of explanation, and de Hartmann would begin to play the theme, which by then he had worked out into a rich harmony. Sometimes the result was spectacular: a beautiful ensemble never seen before would appear as if by magic. At other times, the task was too difficult and the exercise broke down, to be worked over for hours during the succeeding days.

In addition to the set exercises, many hours were spent in performing rhythms with the feet to music improvised by Hartmann. Sometimes Gurdjieff also used his famous Stop Exercise. At any moment of the day or night, he might shout: “Stop!” when everyone within hearing had to arrest all movement. First the eyes were to fix upon the object of their gaze. The body was to remain motionless in the exact posture of the moment the word ‘stop’ was heard, and the thought present in the mind was to be held. In short, every voluntary movement was to be arrested and held. The Stop might last a few seconds, or five, ten minutes or more. The posture might be painful or even dangerous; but, if we were sincere and conscientious, we would do nothing to ease it. We had to wait until Gurdjieff shouted “*Davay!*” or, “Continue!” and then resume what we had been doing before.

The rhythmic exercises were often so complicated and unnatural that I despaired of learning them. And yet, again and again, a minor miracle occurred. After hours of fruitless and maddening struggle, the body would suddenly give way, and the impossible movement would be made. The work in the Study House always continued until midnight and often much later, so that we seldom had more than three or four hours’ sleep before starting the morning’s work. About midnight Gurdjieff would call out: “*Kto hochet spat, mojet itti spat,*” or “Who want sleep go sleep.” One or two would get up and go out, but the great majority remained, knowing that often the most interesting explanations and demonstrations were given after the regular work was done.

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These two excerpts are taken from John Bennett’s autobiography, Witness: the Story of a Search. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1962, pp. 46–48, 90–91. Published with the kind permission of [Bennett Books](#). John G. Bennett was a British scientist, mathematician, and philosopher who integrated scientific research with studies of Asiatic languages and religions. While in Constantinople in 1921—during the aftermath of the Great War and the Russian Revolution—he met both G. I. Gurdjieff and [P. D. Ouspensky](#). These meetings shaped the direction of his spiritual development and in the summer of 1923, he spent three months at Gurdjieff’s [Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man](#) in France.

[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Dancing

With Gurdjieff in St Petersburg and Paris

by Anna Butkovsky-Hewitt



In 1922 Gurdjieff arrived in Paris with several of his pupils (after spending some time in Constantinople), and as he now re-established his group here I rejoined it and left my fashionable salon.

While I was with this group we used to spend every morning in the large dance studio where Jacques Dalcroze held his school. We would watch some of these exercises and dances, and I remember one interesting interpretation by his pupils of a Bach fugue in four voices. The first, following the leading voice, would be clad in a flaming-red dress, another voice was in deep green, a third in indigo blue and the fourth in light pink, all dancing to the piano-rendering of the fugue.

Gurdjieff arranged with Dalcroze that his pupils should have the use of the hall from ten till one every morning, including Sundays. We kept our practice clothes in a large room filled with cupboards. They were loose white tunics with thick, red-cord piping and tassels, and very large baggy trousers in the Turkish or Oriental style. When we were ready we entered the hall and formed ourselves into six rows of

eight pupils, with about three yards between each of us.

Gurdjieff explained to us about the differences in character between dancers, each of whom as it were 'printed' his individuality on his own movements. The predominant centre (of the three centres), he said, showed itself in the expression of these movements.

One that I particularly recall was a very difficult pose which ended in a reclining position of the body like Canova's statue of Pauline Borghese. The movement was to swing swiftly from a standing position into this reclining one—very hard to achieve. But we were all trying it and repeating it together, and in watching the movements of the others we found we helped ourselves. This gliding, sliding and 'falling' on the floor in a single movement was never successfully achieved by some of the pupils who were always frightened of the risk of falling and hurting themselves, and so could never do it.

Another exercise I remember was to dance like a faun holding grapes in his hands, one hand held higher than the other. One girl, I remember, used to try to make all these movements 'pretty' or 'graceful,' but this was not at all what they were meant to attain; it was meant to be achieved by interior control. And I have a vivid picture in my memory of a young man who tried to hop right round the hall on his own, who was brought up short by a loud shout and told to sit and watch how the others were doing it—like a sheep brought to order by a dog and re-established in the flock.

Gurdjieff formulated the dance-patterns or designs and imparted them to Mr Mironoff, whom we knew as our *starosta* or foreman. It was he who, following Gurdjieff's instructions and sometimes his demonstrations, acted as our teacher, having been through them with Gurdjieff beforehand. He helped us back at the house where we were living in Auteuil, and here during the rest of the day we used to practice privately.

Gurdjieff was very anxious to get us on the stage at the Théâtre du Champs-Élysées, but first he insisted on perfection. He himself, he told us one day, had learned the way of the dancing dervishes of the East in one of their monasteries, and some of this went into what he passed on to us. Every movement was a tremendous effort to achieve certain qualities, to surmount the physical obstacles and to develop the will-power. Such a way of dancing was certainly very new.

It used to exhaust us completely, but still we had to go on—to endure and overcome it. And in a way we were living as if in a monastery ourselves. We were given our keep and meals, but had no money of our own. We were each given fifty centimes a day, which was the cost of the tram fare from our house to the Dalcroze Institute and back. And there were certain duties we all had to perform in the household.

In the evenings we all gathered together for discussions with Gurdjieff. Sometimes he talked to us, sometimes he listened while two of the pupils discussed problems or aspects of the dances. Then afterwards we all joined in and asked questions.

Eventually, after we had been living in this way for quite a long time, some of the best pupils were

selected to form a final group, and after further rigorous practice these gave public performances both in Paris and New York.

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Excerpt from With Gurdjieff in St Petersburg and Paris, Anna Butkovsky-Hewitt with Mary Cosh and Alicia Street, Weiser, 1978, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978, pp. 126–129. A skilled pianist and dancer, Anna Butkovsky-Hewitt was introduced to Gurdjieff in St. Petersburg in 1916 by [P. D. Ouspensky](#), and the two of them became Gurdjieff's first pupils in Russia. Later she rejoined Gurdjieff and his circle in Paris in 1922, where she ran a fashionable dress salon.

[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Gurdjieff Movements Demonstration

by [Louise Welch](#)



Early in January, 1924, Gurdjieff arrived on the *SS Paris*. Among the thirty people who accompanied him were Mme. [Olga de Hartmann](#), then his secretary, and her husband, [Thomas de Hartmann](#), a gifted pianist and composer who in the old days had played for the Czar and composed music for the Imperial Ballet. It was Hartmann who put Gurdjieff's musical themes into playable script. Later the troupe was moved to more permanent quarters in a three-story house on the west side of Manhattan. One side housed Gurdjieff and the Hartmanns; on the other lived the younger students.

Practice sessions of Gurdjieff's sacred dances, called more simply 'movements', were begun in a studio belonging to Rosetta O'Neil, and later at Lesley Hall, not far from the brownstone house. In the manner of the institute, the students swept, scrubbed the hall, and constructed a stage adequate for three rows of dancers. The watchword was working together. Mme. de Hartmann was surrounded by women cutting patterns and sewing costumes. Drums and a piano were moved in. For the first private demonstration of the dancing, Orage invited writers, artists, and other interested people. Gurdjieff seemed gratified by their response, and said his group was ready for a more public demonstration.

Orage had already met Alice and Irene Lewisohn, daughters of the philanthropist responsible for the

Lewisohn stadium, who owned the Neighborhood Playhouse. After seeing the movements at Lesley Hall, the sisters offered their theater for the first general showing of the sacred dances, which took place early in February 1924.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the unpreparedness of Americans for that first viewing of Gurdjieff's pupils in action. They knew vaguely that the movements were some sort of special dance, coming from ancient Eastern sources. At that moment, innovative dance centered about the Isadora Duncan influence, then considered revolutionary, or, for more classical tastes, there was a growing interest in ballet. Contradictory rumors about the demonstration in Paris reached the ears of those specially concerned with dance as an art form, who realized that this form would have to be regarded in some new way, and were anxious to be among the first to view it.

Lisa Delza, dancer and choreographer, remembers the excitement she felt at hearing from the poet, Hart Crane, that there was to be a performance of the Gurdjieff movements at the Neighborhood Playhouse, which had an *avant-garde* reputation of its own. Miss Delza recalls:

We went with Jean Toomer and Margaret Naumberg who was then head of the Walden school. Outside the theater, Orage introduced us to Gurdjieff. He was standing at the lobby entrance handing out tickets—you know how he did things. Some he passed by after he looked them over, and others he gave tickets to. He gave them to us and we were in.

Though he did not take part in the dances, Orage talked from the stage to prepare the audience for what they were about to see. Orage said:

Such gymnastics as these have a double aim. They contain and express a certain form of knowledge and at the same time serve as a means to acquire a harmonious state of being.

The farthest possible limits of one's strength are known through the combination of unnatural movements in the individual gymnastics, which help to obtain certain qualities of sensation, various degrees of concentration, and the requisite directing of thought and the senses.

Thus the ancient sacred dance ... is a book, as it were, containing definite knowledge.

The program began with the dancers in an almost military order of seven files and three rows, but costumed with quite unmilitary softness. Both men and women wore white tunics over full white trousers gathered at the ankle, much like the Rajput way of dressing, with its yielding responsiveness to bodily motion. The tunics were belted with wide sashes, looped on the left side, in the seven colors of the spectrum, and for the first few movements the dancers stood in the order: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet. Though they remained so for the 'obligatories', their swift movement in complex figures appeared to make the colors change and shift. Someone in the audience said that it seemed like watching white light passed very slowly through a prism and breaking into its spectral order.

Dervish exercises followed, performed by men in Islamic costumes, and then dances of an elusive beauty, based upon symbols associated with the Gurdjieff work. There was a pause, followed by a silence the audience shared, which has since been noted as characteristic of intermissions at such demonstrations. People seemed not to feel like chattering and were attentive the moment Orage returned to the stage to prepare them for the ‘stop’ exercise.

As soon as the dancer hears the shout to stop, Orage explained, he must ‘freeze’ and remain motionless until the signal to melt into his more usual posture. There were several explanations for the exercise, he told them. Since the body is made to stop in quite unplanned positions, the dancer cannot help but observe himself in a new situation—between postures, as it were. This was one way to break the vicious circle of his automatism.

But no explanation could wholly prepare either the pupils or the audience for the stop exercise. Those who saw it were electrified. Some reported their reaction as fear. Others were shocked into the vision of a new human possibility. Others reported that the dancers, still frozen in the stop, fell off the stage into the orchestra pit. That did not, of course, actually happen, but the shock of the immediate and complete obedience to the shouted signal dazzled the audience in unforeseen ways.

New York, February 1924.

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This excerpt is taken from Louise Welch's, Orage with Gurdjieff in America, Boston / London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982, pp. 3–6. In the late 1920s, Louise Welch studied with [A. R. Orage](#) during his eight years in New York. Later she visited Gurdjieff's [Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man](#) in Fontainebleau where she met Gurdjieff. Later, when the Ouspenskys came to the US in 1941, she worked with them in New York and Mendham, NJ. After the deaths of both Ouspensky and Gurdjieff, she was among those assembled by [Jeanne de Salzmann](#) to become a trustee of the [Gurdjieff Foundation](#) in America.

[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

The Role of Movement in the Complete Education of Man

by [René Daumal](#)



Sometimes one of life's accidents—misfortune, a deeply moving encounter—rattles the relatively factitious and solid edifice that a human being has built up for the comfort of his existence. Shaken to what he believes to be his roots, he is burned for an instant by the fire of a question, a doubt: who am I? why am I living? where am I going? At this moment of reality, he thinks. But such moments are almost always exceptional and accidental, particularly for the specialized men—conditioned by social attitudes, withdrawn into vicious circles in the shadows of their consciousness—that our modern civilization produces in abundance. But the edifice's semblance of balance is rarely compromised in a serious way. For the question "who am I," civil status, first names, last names, positions, professions, titles, ranks, social circles, mirrors, ambitions, vanities and laziness are there to give the pretense of an answer. If the person is of a slightly speculative nature, his little internal philosophy also keeps answers to these rattling questions—brilliant, consoling or approximative answers—in reserve. And man, that phantom vessel, sets off again under his illusory rigging on the waves of this world where, at times, a real vessel leaves its wake.

Moreover, how would he have resolved these questions? Even looking at them straight on—as in Jacob’s time men confronted blazing angels on mountaintops and struggled with them, burning their limbs—what could he do? Where to begin? It is difficult to start questioning everything if one has not seen or at very least heard of an open way, no matter how hard or narrow it might be, in the search for a real answer. But in the miraculous logic of life, it seems that every true search will find the external help, the road-signs it needs: not a vehicle which would transport man effortlessly, in which he could rest and let himself be driven, but a precise finger which always shows the most direct, and the harshest, path, in an area where each one, to go forward, can only count on his own effort.

What to do, where to begin for those whom doubt has shaken, for those who have not lost the childhood desire to seek themselves, to experience themselves, to build themselves? And what to do to spare the child experiences which are often long and painful, to guide him along a path of normal human development (I do not mean conforming to external and arbitrary rules, but following the real and complete evolution of the consciousness invested in a human individual)? There is no lack of educators or supposed instructors who believe or make believe that they have found the key, the ideal system. In reality, these systems almost always center on an idea or observation that is true, but partial. For one, the perfect education will be the fully natural, animal development of the human beast; for another, the cultivation of spontaneity and sensitivity above all; for a third, the methodic exercise of intellectual faculties. Almost always, they will place the accent on a particular discipline dear to them: physical culture, sports, camping, painting, music, philosophy or natural history. Almost always, they are men with hearts full of good intentions; and some of them are eminently dangerous because they uniformly impose their good intentions, their limited concepts, their manias or even their tics on the students confided to them, without realizing that a given educational method, excellent for one, will make the other a mental cripple.

If I have spoken of a miraculous logic of life, it is because at a time when the need for it in all of us is so great, I have seen in action a method of education, in the exact meaning of the word, capable of indicating to each one, child or adult, the truest direction in which to search for himself. Not only of indicating, but, by an incessant call to the consciousness and presence of the total individual, by exercises, conditions and experiments appropriate to each one, of inciting each one to walk, blossom and ripen in this path on which each one goes alone, in the solitude of a single presence which is nonetheless the place where we can all communicate.

The fact is that there exists a teaching founded on this knowledge, which can address every human being because it addresses every aspect of the human being. Not by compiling various methods and teachings, as do most current “educational” institutions, which believe they can develop the whole being by adding together one hour of mathematics, one hour of drawing and one hour of gymnastics, thus cutting the individual into little slices, whose center of centers, dispersed, is lost; but rather, by first asking each one to be present as he is, at that very moment, with all he possesses in organs, faculties and acquisitions, from head to foot via the heart. And the only form of existence common to the diverse aspects of the individual being, which will thus be the means, the grounds of this teaching, is movement. If someone says, the same as of the moving body, that one is “emotionally moved,” that “thought races,” these metaphors are not simply rhetorical figures. All of this is movement. And all movement is subject to a

speed (a tempo), a cadence and a rhythm. The science—not only theoretical, but lived—of speeds, cadences and rhythms will thus be a choice means for a genuine education. This practical science has several aspects. Two of the main ones are or were known under the names of dance and music: arts, not as the digestive, emotional or intellectual gratifications we usually know, but as a superior know-how, a knowing-how-to-make-oneself, in the sense that Music for the Greeks enveloped all culture; in the sense that Poetry is creation, edification of the self.

But still I fear, by this theoretical display, that I am veering away from the central fact. I would like to make you attend one of these “lessons,” or rather one of these life-concentrates. But no, it would not be enough for you to see and hear; even repeated over and over, the sight would always have something new, you would feel that work was being done, that something was on the move, but it would still be an external sight.

A whole other landscape, which opens in the self, appears to him who takes part (if only once) in these “lessons.” First, there is an internal chaos, a profound confusion; everything is put back into question. They ask you to make very simple gestures: your body no longer obeys as soon as you step slightly away from your old habits. They ask you to express a very simple feeling and you remain expressionless, or with inappropriate expressions, as soon as you are stripped of your learned attitudes and conventional masks. They ask you to make a very simple effort of memory, reflection, calculation, and your intelligence works only with great pain as soon as your associative mechanisms, your set expressions and your clichés have fallen in cold ashes on your brains and tongues. This experience, with which life is stingy, is offered you at every moment. Every minute, you see a bit more clearly all that is mechanism, death, sleep, cowardice, pose, vanity, chatter, in the various formations of your being. But you will not be crushed by despair, for you will see an open path, a way to settle into the flickering, poor and naked glimmer which, with eclipses, glows in you. You will see a way to revive this little flame, to feed it, to make it grow and last and rush onto the free path that it must light. Then you will understand that when the pupil who had such difficulty with the simple act of walking suddenly lights up with joy and ease, it is because this joy is the sign that, finally, he has really performed the action of walking at a given pace—not made the physical pretense of walking, but has consciously walked at this pace, harmonizing his torso with his legs, his head with his heart, and his heart with his feet. You will know what this joy can mean from real contact with yourself, when it rises up in you, when not only a simple pace but an entire rhythm comes to life in your body. In your heart, you will discover treasures and manure heaps. You will see your brain working, your blatant theories, the mouldy libraries that encumber the room upstairs. And perhaps, at that moment, an eye will open inside your skull, and will shoo out flocks of chattering parrots. You will see what those who stood stock-still saw: what jungles, what aviaries, what menageries full of cries, murmurs, growls, what a realm of which you are king, and what disorder the country has fallen into because the prince was sleeping or dreaming of distant nations. And time will seem very short indeed. There is so much clearing out to do, so much order to establish and so many orders to give.

Sometimes, the voice that externally directs you will point out that a given muscle in your body is too tense, or not tense enough; that a given nerve is uselessly irritated; or that your mind is wandering into other lands. You will know that this was true, you will pull yourself together. Little by little a profound

operation, whose only visible sign is a joy, a relaxation, a sudden ease in your entire body, will be accomplished in you. And little by little, you will begin to seek, in the acts of your life, that consciousness of being here. More clarity, more justice and judiciousness will develop in your gestures, your works, your rest and your daily relations. Or sometimes that voice will speak a little longer, and its words will fall on you as onto well-ploughed earth, whereas for another they would have inspired only sterile curiosity.

Since we must give everything a name, when someone asks [Mme. de S.](#) what her “courses” consist of, she generally answers that they consist of *movement*. The word has the double advantage of being exact, provided one takes it in its complete sense, and of being safe from label-stickers of every category, from every something-ism. By appropriate movements of all kinds (including the active and conscious immobility which is an absolute mode of movement), by suggesting speeds, paces and rhythms to an individual’s diverse activities, such a method guides him along paths at whose bends he inevitably meets an often unexpected side of himself. Man can thus, step by step, manage to weigh what he is worth, what he is capable of; to command with appropriate economy, for the best possible return, the resources, reserves, transformations and uses of his energy—in all the aspects in which it manifests itself; to move body, feelings and thought in mutual balance toward his goal; to know what he wants to do and to do it, to love doing it, to want what he does.

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Translated by Mark Polizzotti from the anthology he edited, The Powers of the Word: Selected Essays and Notes of René Daumal, 1927–1943, City Lights (San Francisco), 1991. One of the most gifted literary figures in France in the early part of the twentieth century, René Daumal was a genuine seeker of truth and spent the last fourteen years of his life studying the teaching of Gurdjieff.

[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

A Talk on the Dances

by an Older Pupil of Gurdjieff, Paris, 1947

Sacred dances and movements have always played an important part in the work of real schools. They express an unknown dimension and reveal what is hidden from the average man—the reality of a higher level of being. If we are able to pass from our ordinary level to a higher, it means that something in us is changed. The changes are governed by definite cosmic laws, and a knowledge of these laws exists and can be discovered. Gurdjieff in his early travels and sojourns in temples and monasteries in the Middle and Far East and Central Asia witnessed and took part in various ritual dances and ceremonies; and he realized that the dance could be used as a language to express knowledge of a higher order—cosmic knowledge. This language is mathematical, according to exact measure. Every movement has its appointed place, its duration and weight. The combinations and sequences are mathematically calculated. Postures and attitudes are arranged to produce definite, predetermined emotions. In these, he who is watching them may also participate—he may read them as a script, in which the higher emotions and higher mind can take part.

In creating these movements each detail has a meaning, the smallest element is taken into account, nothing is left to chance or to imagination. There is only one possible gesture, posture and rhythm with which to represent a given human or cosmic situation. Another gesture, posture or movement would not present the truth—it would be false. If there is the least miscalculation in the composition of a movement the dance would be desecrated, and fantasy would take the place of knowledge. Mr. Gurdjieff, during a long life devoted to study and questioning, mastered the principles of those sacred dances which constitute a branch of objective art. Understanding the principles, he was able to demonstrate truths through these movements.

The student, even from the beginning, through the high degree of sustained attention required to perfect himself in the movements, is using one of the specific means of self-knowledge, and of attaining ‘the cognition and comprehension of reality.’

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An excerpt from [C. S. Nott's](#), Journey Through This World: The Second Journal of a Pupil, Weiser, 1969, pp. 240–241.

[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

A Session of "Movements"

The Old Man and the Children of the Age

by Pierre Schaeffer

For those who get no more answers because they ask no more questions there are still the "movements." These "movements" brought together the groups of different standards into a larger and in some ways more open group, and the necessary qualifications of the members also seemed rather different. The large number of new arrivals necessitated the continual division of the classes and the formation of more and more courses for beginners. Here again there were two opposite streams, like those I tried to describe with regard to the "work." The fact was that the "movements" satisfied so well these cravers after inner stability (some of them at first did not even suspect the existence of Gurdjieff and had no idea that the "movements" formed part of a wider teaching) that they would come flocking to take part, and were strangely punctual and strangely persevering for a time. They reminded me by their assiduity of two apparently quite dissimilar kinds of people, on the one hand of novices in a convent, and on the other, of members of a rugby team. But can this have been Gurdjieff's aim? Did he really take all this trouble for the sake of the performers, arranging, manipulating, and, with his sharp eye, sorting out the best? The best for what?

Any description, however clever, would fail to convey these "movements." All I can say is that thanks to them, work of an extraordinary precision took place in our moving centres, a skilful disconnection became apparent in the functioning of our muscles and we acquired an intimate insight into the workings of our bodies. The stricter the execution of a movement, the greater the possible control and supremacy over every aspect of co-ordination. Once the machine was wound up and running by itself the exercise was made complicated to a degree never dreamed of by the beginners, given up as they were entirely to the joys of an apparent harmony. With intense difficulty the intellectual centre was first of all brought into play, then the emotional centre, or possibly both together. How can I explain this to someone who has not experienced it? To the outsider, what significance can there be in the efforts of these people to make asymmetrical movements with arms and legs, at the same time doing more and more complicated mental arithmetic and, to crown all, being told to perform in a religious spirit? What a wonderfully conventional phrase! What religion? It didn't matter in the least. It was not enough to emerge from the Metro, one also had to emerge from one's own private tunnel. To those who were striving for the most intimate physical co-ordination while at the same time keeping to the rhythm and the steps and making mental calculations, the extra command to do it all "in a religious spirit" involved no misunderstanding. The difficulty lay not in grasping the meaning but in acting on it.

"You now say God have mercy" Gurdjieff would say. The docile ones at once cried out in a loud voice

"God have mercy." ("You not shout loud enough.") Then there were the believers for whom the words did, after all, hold a meaning; they were astonished at the gymnastic prayers. It seemed that they were asked to perform a spiritual exercise the wrong way round, first to make a physical effort, then a mental one and lastly to bring in the emotions. Here were no comfortable hassocks, no glamour, no stained glass or soft music. To the strains of middle-Eastern music on a piano tuned to augmented seconds (not everybody's taste), muscles stiffened as arms took up the required position, relaxed again for a skilful movement of the legs, while all the time the mental calculations were proceeding. Each one took his turn in a kind of gymnastic canon without losing his proper place in the row; no-one was able to imitate the one in front but the slightest mistake threw out the row, if not the block, or even the whole forty-two performers. On top of all this, at the word of command, all inhibitions and fear of ridicule had to be cast aside and the words "God have mercy" shouted out loud.

There were no down-cast eyes or false ecstasy. Sometimes, if the "movements" went well, if exercise No. 27 (there were no names, only numbers) reached the required standard, it became possible to catch a glimpse of the goal, that is, collective liberation from mechanicalness, and the running of a machine now under full control. The spirit, now served by the body, attained a higher sphere, but this was nothing like the feeling of being moved or exalted. Rather, it resembled one's feeling on gaining a hard-won height that had to be quickly abandoned because of giddiness. This experience was like the super-effort of the man who, to save his skin, runs faster than ever he thought he could. It would come in a flash, especially if Gurdjieff wasn't there. When he was there he was always complicating the exercises and inventing new ones, and never, never gave us time to draw breath or to take stock.

He would walk amongst the dancers, straightening a row here, bending a torso there, correcting the position of an arm or leg and then moving on to the following line, making it do the next figure so that when all were once more in motion the exercise moved on from line to line, like a wave. Never mind about your bodies, it's your state that counts. You are nothing but the hieroglyphs of an inexhaustible language that I shall continue to speak through you and whose secret I shall guard with my life. Though you may be clumsy, slow and lifeless, go on, write, write in your muscles, in your heads and, if possible, in your hearts. These are texts to be deciphered inwardly; only those who transmit them can understand them. You are living ciphers.

Some of the instructors were outstanding; they were usually girls who were the most gifted. They would note the hieroglyphs on little diagrams, receipts for the exercises, a collective score. Occasionally there were public performances. Gurdjieff, in one of his irrepressible freaks, would dress everyone up in Turkish costume. This just had to be borne. Misunderstanding would reach its height. The idle curious, to whom the aesthetic side mattered most, would go away, outraged; the other, less snobbish spectators, might guess that something important was going on, in spite of the fancy dress, something incomplete but possibly prodigious. As for the corps de ballet, these Parisians in Turkish slippers, Gurdjieff would simply throw them handfuls of boiled sweets.

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Excerpted from pages 433–437 of the author’s chapter “The Old Man and the Children of the Age” in Louis Pauwel’s anthology, Gurdjieff. Pierre Schaeffer (1910-1995) was an engineer, musician, composer, researcher and theorist who developed Concrete Music. He was also a pioneer in the development of radio, television and cinema in France as well as a novelist, essayist and cultural critic.

[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Remember Inner Work

by Jessmin Howarth



We all know that Mr Gurdjieff considered his system of movements an essential part of his teaching. It is now over 60 years since these movements were first taught to groups. This was when Mr Gurdjieff was in Tiflis. He gave [Mme de Salzmänn](#)'s pupils a number of exercises for attention and co-ordination. These later became obligatory for anyone who wished to study with him. When, during the Revolution, he was able to escape with some of his pupils from Russia, Mr Gurdjieff also taught this group adaptations of dervish movements and sacred rituals which he had seen in Central Asia. In order to attract interest in his work, these movements were shown to the public in Constantinople. Two years later, when he came to France and worked at the [Priuré](#) with his Russian and some English pupils, Mr Gurdjieff prepared a much more extensive programme of "Sacred Dances" which was performed at the Théâtre des Champs Elysées in Paris. In 1924 he came to America and presented demonstrations in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago and Boston. Since then, these movements have been preserved.

In the summer of 1924 and later, when Mr Gurdjieff was writing [Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson](#), the movements were practised regularly, first here in New York (from 1925 on) by the [Orage](#) groups, then in England (from 1936 to 1938) by the [Ouspensky](#) groups and in Paris by Mme de Salzmänn's groups. Just

before the second world war began, Mr Gurdjieff resumed teaching and carried on the work in Paris in spite of the German occupation.

This was an extraordinary period: he created scores of exercises, combinations and sequences, mathematically calculated, designed to help sustain attention and to understand what we now call sensation, to provide shocks and new impressions, and to induce initially certain feelings and more collected states. A great number of these exercises, the “Thirty Nine” and others, he left with us here in New York in the spring of 1949, a few months before he died—and these movements have been studied here ever since.

Some of you worked with Mr Gurdjieff at that time and some have worked since. Everyone, I think, must have found that through the practise of the movements one has direct experiences that lead through the body and feelings to an understanding of many of the work ideas which might, lacking this means, remain simply as theory.

We realise in the movements that we are rarely awake to our own life—inner and outer. We see that we always react in a habitual and conditioned way; we become aware that our three main centres, head, body, feeling, rarely work together or in harmony. We begin to try to move always intentionally—not mechanically—and we discover in ourselves many hitherto unexpected possibilities. We find that one can collect one’s attention; that one can be awake at times and have an overall sensation of oneself; that a quietness of mind, an awareness of body and an interest of feeling can be brought together and that this results in a more complete state of attentiveness in which the life force is felt and one is sensitive to higher influences. Thus, one has a taste of how life can be lived differently.

Because that is so, the movements are sacred for us. With the help of Mme de Salzmann and the teachers she sends us from Paris, we try to keep the movements as pure as when they were first given and to protect them from distortion and superstition.

Tonight our classes are going to share with you the work they are doing in movements at the present time. We wish to share with you memories of Mr Gurdjieff—how, when he would dictate a series of attitudes and rhythms which it seemed impossible to execute, he would respect our individual efforts and help us remember our true aim by often repeating, “Remember inner work! Remember inner work!”

For those who are watching, maybe they could try to decipher in the exercises—especially in the group movements—the language Mr Gurdjieff was using to express in the form of movements—truths—human truths—cosmic truths, the laws he had discovered during a life of search and sacrifice. There again, we remember that sometimes, when we had managed to get through a difficult multiplication series, or other movement based on the enneagram, Mr Gurdjieff, seeing an approximation of the design, the diagram he had intended, would, to our surprise, call out: “Bravo! Bravo!”

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First published in The Gurdjieff Society: Report of the Council to Members (London) April 1995-1996. Jessmin Howarth taught movements in Europe and America from 1924 until her death in 1984. She delivered this talk during a January 13th celebration of Gurdjieff's birthday in New York City in the early 1980s.

Sacred Dance: The Search for Conscious Harmony

An Interview with Pauline de Dampierre

Conducted by Jacques Le Vallois



Jacques Le Vallois: There is undoubtedly a good reason why Peter Brook's *Meetings With Remarkable Men* ends with a sequence of sacred dances; I felt it was one of the strongest parts of the whole film. They are unlike any dances we ordinarily see performed in public. The exactitude and precision of the gestures seem to obey a certain order; and then they don't seem to be natural movements, but rather give the impression of being the result of a long, special training. I have to say that these dances touched my emotions in an unaccustomed way.

So I'm very glad to be able to ask you some questions today, to find out more about them: what they mean and how they produce such an effect. First of all, I'd like to ask: what meaning did Gurdjieff attribute to them?

Pauline de Dampierre: In the book from which the film is taken, you will find some very important indications of that meaning, and they are surprising for us because they don't seem to coincide either with our idea of art or with the devotional aspect of sacred dance. Describing his stay in the monastery shown in the film, Gurdjieff tells about watching the priestesses work. They had to learn a number of postures and reproduce them very exactly. He says that these postures have a meaning, and that they constitute an alphabet; so in the evening, when the priestesses dance in the great hall of the temple, the brothers can read in these postures the truths that were implanted in them several thousand years ago and which are transmitted in this way from one generation to another. He was astonished by the precision and the purity of the positions, and touched by them without yet understanding what they meant. We are in an analogous situation. And in fact, the way in which we are touched is our best approach to the whole new world that these movements can open. You only had glimpses of a few of them in the film.

Jacques Le Vallois: Yes, they were evidently incomplete. How would you describe these dances?

Pauline de Dampierre: How to describe them—perhaps there's no better way than the answer Gurdjieff gave his pupil Ouspensky, when he told him to imagine that there was a mechanism for studying the planets which represented visually the laws governing their movements, reminding the onlooker of all he knows about the solar system. He said there was something like that in the rhythm of sacred dances; and he stated enigmatically that through these strictly defined movements and the patterns made by the dancers, certain laws are made visible and intelligible to those who know them.

And I would add that Gurdjieff made his pupils feel the significance of these dances much more by his presence and the influence it exerted than by explanations. He led his pupils to try constantly to relate their work to the central element of consciousness which was the foundation of his teaching.

Jacques Le Vallois: Is practicing these movements a way of approaching Gurdjieff's teaching?

Pauline de Dampierre: Yes, one of the ways. You may imagine how difficult it is to sum up the essence of this teaching in a few words; let's just say that it allows a person to feel in him or herself the existence of two poles. One pole corresponds to one's real possibility, if one is willing to look for it—the awakening of consciousness, the development of being, presence to oneself. The other pole corresponds to the way we actually live, enslaved by our automatism, our passivity, our sleep. To try to wake up and escape from this sleep could be the direction of our whole life, at every moment; special conditions and an exceptional method of study are provided by these dances.

Jacques Le Vallois: Where do they come from, these dances—or rather “movements,” as you call them? Did Gurdjieff find them on his travels, or did he compose them himself?

Pauline de Dampierre: Both! All his travels and research were for the purpose of mastering the knowledge of the laws that govern the lives of human beings. The same laws are behind the ritual dances which he saw in many places, and it is according to them that the dances were composed. He learned that the law governing our slavery and spiritual sleep decrees that the automatism of our thoughts and

feelings is closely bound up with the automatism of our movements and postures. That is the magic circle from which the human being can never escape by himself. But a series of new postures, proceeding from a real knowledge of a different order of laws, can open us to a different order within ourselves that would free us, unify us, and awaken us to the real meaning of our lives, so that our real being could act and make itself heard. This is the “science of movement” which Gurdjieff rediscovered.

Jacques Le Vallois: Seeing these dances for the first time, I had the strange impression of “*jamais vu*”—something I had never seen before. What I saw was a perfect, harmonious whole. Also, there seemed to be a kind of osmosis between the dancers. How much time does it take to reach this degree of perfection?

Pauline de Dampierre: I would say that it takes an entire lifetime for someone finally to reach the beginning—but the beginning of something immensely great. Anyone can begin to do them, but this approach will bring a person into a long process where he will find out that he is not prepared. The preparation must be a gradual one—a gradual increase in the difficulty of the movements and also in the inner resources which are called on. These postures often require movements that are not associated with each other, which the body’s automatism does not make naturally; and also the sequences of positions are hard to memorize. The automatism itself has to adapt itself. Before beginning to work on the sort of dances you saw, a lot of preparatory exercises are necessary which require a sustained attention.

The first requirement is for the correct, pure position; otherwise the meaning is lost.

Jacques Le Vallois: How is the idea of purity to be understood in relation to position?

Pauline de Dampierre: The position becomes something less unconscious. Schematically, let’s say that it’s a firm, balanced position, that allows the person to maintain an inner presence while making a simple gesture, followed through without tension, without any useless or involuntary expenditure of energy. One has to feel the position, have a living impression of it, for it to be right and pure. And this sensitivity does not develop just by itself. It’s necessary to have an outer attitude that corresponds to the inner one.

Jacques Le Vallois: Does that require a special attention which allows the execution of the right movements?

Pauline de Dampierre: That is a first stage.

Jacques Le Vallois: The music accompanying the dances is quite unlike anything I have known before, although certain harmonies perhaps are reminiscent of Near Eastern ones. How does this music act on the dancers?

Pauline de Dampierre: Through the harmonies—but above all, through the composition of the music. Music also can belong to different orders of laws. Its structure, its harmonies, its melody, and its rhythm must accompany not only the outward movements but also the inner impulses which develop

progressively in the course of the exercise. If the quality of vibration is right, it will awaken its counterpart in the dancers; it will not carry them away nor distract them. It continually brings them back to themselves and to their need to be open.

The person who plays for the movements also has an active role. I will give you an example: you see that each of the exercises has a certain tempo which, like all musical tempos, is indicated on the score in the usual way—*lento*, *allegretto*, and so on, and sometimes by the metronome marking. But the metronome is not a sufficient guide. The same tempo that has given a peaceful, collected impression will seem at another time unbearably slow; or one which allowed a vigor and force to appear will now seem hurried. The right tempo is felt when it is in harmony with the inner state, and when the musician allows this harmony to come through his playing. Then the sound itself is transformed and it sustains the effort of the dancers.

Jacques Le Vallois: Could one say that there is a sensation which is a sort of central point of reference, corresponding with a right movement?

Pauline de Dampierre: If that were all, the movements would not have their real meaning; they would not be connected with the basic question with which this teaching confronts us. Again and again, while making the movement, the pupil tries to return to himself and to remember the direction of his search. He must have a deeper, more relaxed, more sustained attention. He feels the great power of his automatism and discovers that he is much more its prisoner than he thought, because the moment he gives in to it, he is lost. But if this attention is sustained, a new energy appears which is higher and more active, which awakens him to himself. The body relaxes completely and begins to participate in a freer way; a new intelligence accompanies the movement. At that moment, the pupil approaches the “exact doing” of which Gurdjieff spoke.

Jacques Le Vallois: Could one speak of this as a “state of grace?”

Pauline de Dampierre: A state of grace—yes. Above all, the dancer experiences that this state asks for much more than he could have imagined. The execution of the movement is a test of truth which doesn't permit cheating: there has to be exactitude in the gesture, obedience to the rhythm, absolute order governing the rows of dancers, unanimity of movement; and at every moment he feels his inadequacy. If he imagines that he can put his trust in a state of grace, his clumsy movement reminds him that his timing is wrong. One of the big discoveries to which this work leads is that the body has to be taught. It is full of tensions, full of all the results of its way of behaving, and not ready to be animated by a state of grace.

If the struggle lasts long enough, a moment comes when this state becomes, for an instant, a reality. Then there is a real coming together: body, feeling, and thought are united. The pupil experiences a demand such as he has never felt before, the need to be nothing but an instrument; and he has never before felt so alive, so independent, so truly free.

Jacques Le Vallois: Is this very special state related with something that could be called a different

energy or vibration?

Pauline de Dampierre: It is certainly related. Sometimes other expressions are used: density of matter and density of vibrations, degree of vivifyingness; but the term energy is more evocative of our own experience. Our ordinary states are connected with a certain quality of energy which has its own characteristics—for instance, a kind of heaviness. A more interiorized state is necessarily linked with a finer quality of energy that comes from a higher level; otherwise it cannot be maintained. If it is maintained, new relations are established between the functions of the body, the thought, and the feeling.

Take the example of rhythm. How can rhythm be defined? It's not just a regular alternation of strong beats and weak ones, of tension and relaxation; it's a pulsing of energy, an ebb and flow of energy which is not usually perceived as such. Gurdjieff gave a very simple explanation to show the importance of rhythm. He was standing, holding one arm out in front. He said:

You see, if I extend my arm this way, I spend a certain amount of energy. If I lower it, I again spend energy, and once more if I lift it again. But if I make a continuous up and down movement, I need much less energy.

With that he showed us that a momentum, something like a sustained musical note, could be established that would support an inner state. In practice, this momentum can be of quite different qualities; it depends on the impulse to which it responds. If the rhythm is rigid and mathematical, if it is “anti-rhythmic,” no momentum is established. On the contrary, it may be disordered and out of control. But there can be a much more subtle rhythm connected with a very fine inner attention. In the moments of grace that you spoke of, there is sometimes such inner unity that one could say that the body moves with the rhythm in a conscious harmony.

Jacques Le Vallois: Does the intellect—or rather, let's say, the mind—act as a restraint?

Pauline de Dampierre: Continually! It is much too ponderous, and it exerts a constant attraction. The attention that's necessary doesn't come from the mind; it has no name and no form.

Jacques Le Vallois: Is what is asked for in these “movements” the core of Gurdjieff's teaching?

Pauline de Dampierre: As I said earlier, the movements provide conditions that are especially favorable and especially concentrated. What is central to this teaching must be lived also in all sorts of other conditions, in which the attractions of the outer world are much stronger. The experience of the movements would have no sense if it were limited to particular conditions. Its usefulness lies in revealing the possibilities and the difficulties of the whole human problem. It confronts the problem of manifestation.

Jacques Le Vallois: You lay stress on the importance of the positions and their exactitude. Can it be said that they contain a symbolic meaning?

Pauline de Dampierre: It all depends on what one is trying to understand. Analyses are not very useful. I don't deny that each of these positions may have a definite, precise meaning, like the *mudras* of the Hindu repertory of gestures, which constitute a language for the transmission of certain information belonging to a body of knowledge. But it mustn't be forgotten that the knowledge of which it speaks has always been linked with the perception of universal and human phenomena, interpenetrating and acting upon one another. These symbolic gestures were addressed to people who were steeped in this knowledge, as we are not. For example, in Buddhist art certain statues hold in one hand an oblong object which is a vase. It will be said, for instance, that this contains the Bodhisattva's nectar of compassion; but it is also understood how this compassion is linked with the symbolism of water, the beneficent water which penetrates and fertilizes and unites. We don't have this understanding.

Jacques Le Vallois: The intellectual explanation of the symbol doesn't seem satisfactory. One could say the same thing about the movements—there isn't an intellectual explanation of them.

Pauline de Dampierre: There could be one, even a very precise one; but it would be “for those who already know”—and they find it for themselves. One might say that in the symbol, two worlds begin to meet. By means of the symbol, a permeability appears between these two orders.

Jacques Le Vallois: Can it also be said that the movements are the artistic expression of a knowledge?

Pauline de Dampierre: In turn, I shall ask you a question: you saw some of these dances in the film. What did you think of them? Did you find in them a certain beauty?

Jacques Le Vallois: The prevailing impression, I would say, was an unquestionable harmony of the whole that seemed to correspond with something true and adequate. But I also felt the beauty of the gestures, and I was very much moved by the music which accompanied them.

Pauline de Dampierre: Nevertheless, while the movements were being performed, the aim was not to create a work of art. I would add that not one of the dancers ever thought of himself as an artist; not one considered himself a specialist in sacred dance. The dancers are usually people who lead active private and professional lives, and at the same time undertake this discipline in order to enrich their search.

You spoke of harmony. What conditions are necessary for this harmony to appear? First of all, there is a canon, a lawful order. This canon comes from a knowledge: that of the relation between form and substance, between the movements of the body and those of the human psyche. Its goal is the evolution of consciousness. But this canon and this knowledge are not enough. The dancer has an essential role to play; without him, the harmony will not appear. He must not submit to this canon mechanically or passively; he must search. There is a question which concerns him deeply, and he must obey consciously. The harmony and the beauty will come from that.

Jacques Le Vallois: The science you have spoken of, if I have understood, is a knowledge of cosmic

laws. Would you say that this science, together with a certain open attitude of search, can create the necessary conditions for the appearance of a very high form of art?

P. de Dampierre: Gurdjieff had a very lofty idea of what he called objective art. One of its characteristics is that it has the same effect on everyone. He described a moment in his youth when he and his fellow searchers found themselves in front of a very special work of art in a desert of Central Asia. At first, they thought it was a very ancient image of a god or a demon; but little by little, they saw that a whole cosmological system could be found absolutely everywhere in it, in all its details—even in the facial features. They found that they could decipher this system, and that they became aware of the feeling that had animated the creators of the statue. They seemed to see them and to hear their voices; in any case, they felt what these people had wished to convey to them.

It's not the ambition of those who study these movements to create a work of this sort; but in the course of their practice, sometimes a very special phenomenon occurs. It may happen that everything comes together so perfectly, with such a shared understanding, that their differences disappear. One doesn't notice one or another person any more. It is as though one individual comes forward, raises his arm, turns his head; only one feeling moves through the whole and activates it. What occurs is an event. I wouldn't go so far as to say that this is the manifestation of an objective law, but a prospect opens toward that horizon.

Jacques Le Vallois: It seems a very far horizon. With nothing to orient them, what chance do people today have of reaching it?

Pauline de Dampierre: First of all, I will say that this possibility opens only at moments. Perhaps people watching the movements have an impression of a whole, of harmony, of the release of an unusual force. They are touched, because it is not a professional performance that they are watching, nor a demonstration of the results of school work, but a living event that is taking place in front of them, with all its risks, its moments of rise and fall. The dancers themselves know this perfectly well; they feel the instability of everything that is happening in themselves. This is the price of the great moments they may experience.

And then there is another aspect, which applies more precisely to your question. We have spoken up till now of this very high vista which unfolds, of a possible culmination of the search. But at the same time these exercises open a prospect that is very simple and very accessible. Anyone can approach them, whatever his capacities; and from that point of view, one can say they answer to a lack in today's world, a need for renewal. These exercises are one of the disciplines one finds today—there are still too few—which point out the necessity of associating the body with an inner, spiritual aspiration. This necessity has been forgotten; the body lives apart, and we don't feel the inadequacy in that situation, and the limitations which it imposes on every plane of our existence. We are given no taste of the body's dormant possibilities; we don't know how to listen to it nor to call it. But a relation could be established—and not only during the practice of a discipline. Those who participate in the work of the movements will tell you that the understanding which has come to them carries over into other moments,

in the most ordinary situations. There is no circumstance in our life which need be cut off from it, not even taking the subway or sitting at one's desk or walking in the street.

So you see, we come back down to the level where we live.

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This interview—translated from the French—was first published in The American Theosophist, Wheaton, IL, LXXIII (5), May, 1985, pp. 175–181. Pauline de Dampierre was one of the intimate circle which gathered around Gurdjieff in the days of the Paris Occupation. Trained as an attorney and journalist, her central interest and occupation have remained in the study and practice of Gurdjieff's ideas. Jacques Le Vallois is the editor-in-chief of the French monthly Aurores, a periodical devoted to the study of traditional civilizations and spiritual search.

Working with the Movements

by Henri Thomasson



If you want to get inside yourself, you must find the right physical position, otherwise you will not be able to sustain your effort for any length of time. It is only when all parts of the body are relaxed and centered around one axis that this is possible. A vertical spine keeps both head and internal organs in a single line that connects with the centre of the earth's attraction. It now becomes possible to collect attention from all parts of one's body in one place, rather than have it dispersed among the various limbs and organs of perception. What was a crude, fragmentary and often quite illusory sensation of awareness becomes an acutely sensitive central vibration that may truly be called 'a sensation of oneself'.

In this position a very special level of attention can be reached, and it brings with it a distinct feeling of the two natures of man: the one belonging to the external world and the other to the mysterious source of life itself.

All the physical processes that take place in the ordinary life of the body belong to the first nature. Once we recognise the ease with which we slide from most of our efforts of attention into the habitual functioning of our thoughts and accept the whole range of our everyday joys and sufferings, we have a clear indication of the taste and quality of the lower world.

When all thoughts and imagination drop away and only the vibrations of the living body are the centre of attention, the other world becomes accessible. Here all accustomed motives of desire and curiosity become completely unreal and a new kind of thought, liberated from form and composed of a pure but very fragile energy, appears.

It is possible to belong to both of these worlds at once, but for this a new relationship between them must be established and the present state of affairs, where the external takes everything for itself, must be reversed. The lower nature should be at the service of the higher, for a passive element can never be other than subservient to one that is active.

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In spite of all this theoretical knowledge, I myself at first experienced a strong rejection of the exercises, always called ‘the Movements’, which Gurdjieff insisted on as an essential part of his teaching.

Whenever I saw a group of pupils practising these gymnastics, as I called them, I had a strong impression that here was a secondary form of work, very good for helping those who were intellectually limited. It was natural that such people should be enthusiastic about what they were doing, but I certainly belonged to a different category of learner.

This impression lasted for a long time, even after I had overcome my refusal and begun to practise. I had to put in a great deal of very attentive work before my body began to be able to escape even a little from the inhibitions imposed on it by other parts of myself and to sense the power of these exercises and dances. Only at these moments was it possible for me to perform the required movements in a way I could consider even relatively satisfactory.

It was much longer before I had any concrete and physical experience of the strange alchemy by which the movements worked. Then quite unknown channels of energy opened up in me, breaking through barriers and smoothing down the grooves through which my energy was accustomed to flow away.

I began to realise the many-sided nature of these movements. At first sight they seem only to be exercises of attention, but they can also be regarded as a language in the sense that, by symbolic gestures and other signs, postures and displacements, they express cosmic laws which are difficult to perceive through our ordinary senses and are even beyond the scope of our present understanding. Some movements seem quite clearly to offer a means of transmitting knowledge that rational thought cannot grasp to levels in a man which are higher than any he can ordinarily reach. He can feel a sort of alchemical process taking place in him that not only gives him glimpses of ‘the Way’, but enables him to move in that direction.

At first the only problem that arises in working on the movements is the establishment of the correct posture and the succession of gestures and displacements that go with it. At this stage, the attention must be focused on the parts of the body that have to perform the various movements, either simultaneously or

in rapid succession. This is difficult enough, but soon another effort is needed—the turning of the most refined quality of attention one can achieve towards the sensation of oneself as a whole. For a long time one's approach to this additional demand cannot but be very clumsy. Nevertheless, the double effort of attention does sometimes appear, bringing with it a fleeting taste of liberty which, however short its duration, is so unforgettable that it is eagerly sought for again.

Once this kind of work begins to be possible, the movements are no longer controlled by reference to a mental image alone—they depend on the acute sensation of oneself that springs from this more active level of attention. One can say now that the movement is made through and not by me. This changes everything.

However much one may wish to do a movement by reference to a mental image alone, this can never be successful, as the mind is not sufficiently quick to control the instrument that must produce the required physical activity, and the body is inhibited in its attempt to meet a demand to which it is not accustomed. Movements made in this way will be neither precise nor on time. Seeing this, emotion arises and confuses everything. The activity remains on a quite ordinary level and the contractions habitual in ordinary life remain as barriers to the correct flow of energy which begins to stream out in all directions in the uncontrolled way which is one of the chief causes of man's usual lack of contact with his own body.

When attention is dispersed like this, the movements either cannot be done at all or are, at best, a series of mere gymnastics. If, however, a certain amount of inner attention can be maintained, energy flows through the body as it should, using the natural channels which exist for this purpose. This brings a feeling of inner clarity and movements can be made with a sense of ease and freedom, built up partly by the speed of the movements themselves, which seems at times to be beyond the limits of what is possible for the body, and partly by the opening up of inner contacts which come from the changed flow of energy.

Disconnection from interference from the head allows a new freedom of thought and a better control of gesture and helps to keep attention on oneself. The different quality of physical activity which then becomes possible leads in turn to a more positive functioning of the emotions. So for a moment, three centres are experienced as working together on a level that is felt to be the same for them all. Incidentally, this experience makes it possible to be in contact with the specific energy of each centre and to be aware of the mental and physical habits and convolutions of every kind that are the basis of all inward and outward activity.

This equilibrium, however, exists only under threat from the insidious mechanicalness that is always there, waiting to take over. As soon as activity becomes automatic, that is, as soon as a movement is felt to be known, dreams find their way in and the necessary level of attention ceases to be upheld. Then either all attention is absorbed in keeping a sensation of oneself or the pleasure of the easy and harmonious flow of movement occupies one entirely: the movement loses its true direction and should at once be stopped. A different exercise must be substituted in order to activate the attention again and

restore it to the required level. This categorical abandonment of a movement when the inner attitude is at fault is one of the most disconcerting experiences that the beginner has to accept.

As time goes on, the movements bring to life in us parts that have previously existed beyond our ordinary perception. A new world, bathed in the strange sense of inner presence evoked by the exercises, replaces the fog in which our usual mental activities exist and this can bring with it a transcendental emotion.

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What exactly are these movements? This question can really be answered only from direct experience of practise of the movements. Nevertheless it can certainly be said very precisely that they lead to the attainment and maintenance of an awakened state. We would gladly remain satisfied with the sensation of inner life that comes with this state, but the question remains alive in us and draws us on towards aspects that are less immediately perceptible. We feel that we must seek further. The sense of inner life that arises from the work on attention and from relaxation, as well as from the ordered combinations of gesture and posture, gives us a new contact with the body and brings with it a sense of lightness and fluidity that is not entirely physical. It seems that the body is the instrument of a new source of life. It becomes available for all that is asked of it and finds in this act of service both liberty and a joy that is not only the joy of the functions in harmonious movement, or of the more active participation of the entire body, but also the joy of being here as a whole, in a state of relative presence to oneself.

Now we see the possibility of becoming more subtle instruments and of the opening up of channels for those other, higher influences which are always flowing through us, though ordinarily quite unrecognised. Once these become perceptible, they can be used to feed those higher parts in a man which make it possible for him to pursue his search. Because of this, the movements may, in the true sense of the words, be called 'sacred dances', for they provide a link between the level of ordinary life and that higher level which is felt as a means of coming into touch with the divine.

The strange power of the movements to materialise forces of a higher order is not experienced only by those who act as vehicles for these forces. The unfolding of the figures brings into play special inner relationships that are perfectly visible and offer perceptible evidence that the performers are the bearers of forces inherent in the movements themselves and are charged with an influence the effects of which can be felt by the onlookers. A movements class which has practised together for a long time radiates a 'substance', the reality of which, subtle though it be, can be received at an inner level in the same way as colour and sound are received by our ordinary instruments of perception.

So for anyone who practises the movements, they become a search for the means of really living them and for the power they give of being lived in this way. At such a level they lead to the attainment of that world to which prayer and meditation lead on other paths, but which, on this path, includes and makes use of the human apparatus in its entirety.

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First published in The Pursuit of the Present, Two Rivers Press, 1980, pp. 53–58. The book provides a powerful and lucid record of Thomasson's thoughts, feelings and inner struggles during his twenty years of group work in France.

[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Dances are for the Mind

by Paul Reynard

“Dances are for the mind. They give nothing to the soul—the soul does not need anything. A dance has a certain meaning; every movement has a certain content.” G. I. Gurdjieff¹



“One moves the movement and forgets the movement, this is not the movement in itself. If, when stimulated by external things, one moves, it is the impulse of the being. If when not stimulated by external things, one moves, it is the movement of heaven.”²

This ancient Taoist saying could very well be an introduction to the understanding of the “Movements” which hold a very special place in the teaching of G. I. Gurdjieff. The formal performance of the movements, their external action, is the echo of an inner and more potent current of energy. Through the cyclic repetition of a series of attitudes—like the reiteration of a prayer—the attention is sharpened, setting free energies of different qualities and densities (what the Hindu tradition calls *pranas*) and allowing them to be related to one another in a new way. The outer motion is initiated through the impulse issued within, no longer from a one-sided attention, but from an embracing vigilance supported by the body, in accord with the feeling, and under the look of the mind: a threefold attention.

The Movements are spiritual exercises, neither gymnastics nor physiotherapy, and are not meant to create altered states of consciousness (even though this might happen as the automatic result of a work of attention). Their *raison d'être* has to be found in the body of ideas structuring the teaching. The Movements have been created for the experimentation and practice of data which, for the most part, are conveyed orally. When deprived of this connection with the ideas, counterfeit and distortion ensue, and the Movements lose much of their meaning.

“When the movement is right,” said Mme. de Salzmann, “it produces a sound ... a special influence which may be received by those who listen.” It is like the reverberation of vibrations coming from a higher level of consciousness, which might be felt not only among the people performing a given movement, but also by those watching them. In that respect one can say that the Movements are an illustration of the practice of the three lines of work characteristic of the teaching: work on oneself, work with others, and work for the community.

When one begins to study the Movements, very quickly what becomes obvious is the weakness of the attention: it has no endurance, no defense against the endless motion of the associations, and it is often unconsciously taken away at the very moment that its full concentration would be needed. The ordinary mind, by itself, is unstable, being oriented either towards the future or looking back into the past, and, being most of the time identified with some imaginary object, it has no center of gravity. This attention of the mind can initiate a movement or show a direction, but it is unable to engage itself and to participate in the continuity of this movement: *“One moves the movement and forgets the movement, this is not the movement in itself.”*

As for the body, even though it can sometimes show a real intelligence when confronted with the outside world, it is mostly under the sway of its desires, appetites and reactions. However, on the path of inner search, the acknowledgement of the body as an essential foundation for the Work is primordial. At the very beginning of the practice of the preliminary exercises the effort of the attention to memorize different postures seems to be solely formal and to depend mainly upon physical aptitude. But as the exercises become progressively more and more complex, the difficulty of facing the growing demand for coordination of different speeds, different tempos, and different rhythms associated with complicated displacements and canons, calls for a new attentiveness never experienced before.

At that very moment, out of the vision of my being taken aback, absent, the question arises: “Who am I?” There will be, of course, no immediate answer. But the seeing and the acceptance of this lack of relation within myself evoke a nostalgia, the remote memory of a lost authority, a remembering. I am compelled to try to attend as a three-brained being, in other words, I am compelled to try to be present.

What is taking place then, is the awakening of a finer intelligence, a new mind, a thought coming as it were from the heart, the discovery of what in *Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson* Gurdjieff calls “Being Mentation.” The search for this inner presence requires a sacrifice, the letting go of all subjective temptations and all egoistic fascinations: to succeed, to “do,” to get results. This opening to a higher level of consciousness is what we are invited to discover in the practice of the Movements as “Sacred Dances.”



¹ *Views from the Real World: Early Talks of Gurdjieff*. Arkana, 1984, p. 181.

² *The Secret of the Golden Flower: a Chinese Book of Life*. Translated by Richard Wilhelm, Harcourt, Brace & World, 1931, 1962, p. 58.

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Paul Reynard joined a small group in Paris led by [Henriette Lannes](#) in 1946. He began to practice the movements in 1947 with [Jeanne de Salzmann](#), and joined the senior class under the direction of Mr. Gurdjieff that fall. He began as a movements instructor under Marthe de Gaigneron, and in 1969 came to the United States. Since then, he has borne responsibility for movements in the [Gurdjieff Foundation](#) of New York and other US as well as Canadian Gurdjieff Foundations.

[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

The Teacher of Dancing

An interview with Josée de Salzmann

by Odette Manciaux

Gurdjieff was a true “teacher of dancing.” He dedicated part of his life to teaching “rhythmic exercises” which he called the “Movements.” As an opening to the intelligence, he gave them as important a place as he gave to the ideas he was trying to transmit. Josée de Salzmann, who practiced these movements for many years, answers our questions here.



Magazine Littéraire: One has the feeling that the “Movements” had an essential place in Gurdjieff’s teaching. Yet one would tend to regard them as being of minor importance alongside his written works.

Josée de Salzmann: They cannot be of minor importance because the body is important. It is an instrument. Why consider it as a hindrance to spiritual development, an obstacle to the expansion of consciousness? It has to be rehabilitated. This idea is at the very basis of what George Gurdjieff called the “Fourth Way”—a way which presupposes a harmonious development of the whole of man.

Magazine Littéraire: What, then, is the role of these “Movements?”

Josée de Salzmann: They enhance the circulation and the liberation of the energies in man. Each time George Gurdjieff showed an attitude, a gesture, he intended a very precise effect. Each position attracts a definite energy, in a definite direction and with a definite aim. From this point of view one could say that the Movements constitute a language—a language that our intellect cannot understand well but to which the body is sensitive. We think of our body as opaque, sometimes even dreaming of transforming it into something more subtle. But the subtlety is already there. Nothing is dense except the wall of inattention, of insensitivity and passivity which prevents us from seeing.

Magazine Littéraire: Do you mean that the language of Movements helps to enlighten the body just as language in words enlightens the mind?

Josée de Salzmann: It is generally recognized that our thought has to be enlightened, as do our feelings; but one does not think that this same need exists in regard to the body. The body is able to participate in the enlightenment of the whole man. If the body were excluded, the idea that man must become a whole would lose credibility.

Magazine Littéraire: Wouldn't any rhythms, any movements, produce the same effect?

Josée de Salzmann: No. What was specific and unusual in what Gurdjieff brought was a knowledge of the laws of human functioning, and the Movements are worked out on the basis of this knowledge.

Magazine Littéraire: Would the Movements not be, then, a science?

Josée de Salzmann: Exactly. The Movements are based on a science.

Magazine Littéraire: All the same, Gurdjieff sometimes referred to the “Movements” as “Sacred Dances.” Did he just collect them in the course of his wanderings, as a young man, in the Middle East or Central Asia? Or did he create them out of his knowledge of the nature of our energies and our bodies, and of man?

Josée de Salzmann: In [*Meetings With Remarkable Men*](#) he makes no secret of the fact that he had access to monasteries where Sacred Dances were performed. But when we were in his presence, when he was teaching, every time it was a creation—not an improvisation, but a creation. On the one hand, I believe these Movements are not an invention; on the other hand, I think they are not a literal reproduction of dances.

Magazine Littéraire: You speak of the Movements from an essentially technical point of view. However, those who had the opportunity to witness them were struck by their beauty...

Josée de Salzmann: Beauty is a consequence, but it is not the aim. The practice of Movements merely as the pursuit of aesthetics, as gymnastics, or as physical therapy, would only lead to distortion; there would be no real benefit. It was no doubt to guard against this that George Gurdjieff always refused to allow transcription of the Movements. And so very many of them would have been lost if a few of his closest pupils had not recollected them.

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Josée de Salzmann (1923–1991) played a major role in conveying movements in Paris after Gurdjieff's death in 1949. This interview was first published in Magazine Littéraire, Paris, No. 131, Décembre 1977, pp. 23–24.

This Entity We Call the Body

by Don Hoyt



A tomb. A garment, to be discarded at death. An obstacle to the awakening process. A place of bondage.

These are but a sampling of ways in which the human body has been viewed in almost all of the spiritual traditions. One of the more classic expressions of this view can be found in the mantra-like words: “I am not this body.”

It is an utterance that, curiously, is neither true nor false. Rather it is *irrelevant* to whatever purpose or function this brief sojourn on earth is destined to serve. In a strange way the words also betray a disdain of this physical being; a disdain that almost borders on spiritual hubris in that it views as virtually worthless this awesome creation. We would do well to ponder the implications of this perception since at an unconscious level it has profoundly influenced our attitude towards the physical body.

When we move outside the spiritual traditions, we find that the prevailing attitude towards this corporeal reality—this entity we call the body—is not so significantly different. At best the body is viewed as a biological extension of the whole psychic-physical organization that comprises what it is to be a human

being. In this more general context, the body is that which one learns to deal with, to cope with, to placate, to enjoy, to tolerate, to pamper, to control, to discipline, and much more.

Bear in mind, however, that these delineations of how we relate to this living creature, are merely punctuation marks falling across the continuum of general awareness. For the most part the body—as a living being—rarely comes into the field of our consciousness.

We are for the most part simply oblivious of its presence as an existential reality—as a living entity having its own intelligence and sphere of awareness. Except of course when it is hungry, in need of rest or sex, or when it is sending out signals of euphoric pleasure or intense pain.

Nevertheless, some observers might well respond to this with the disclaimer that there has been an increasing interest, particularly in the last three decades, in techniques that promise to enhance our relation to the body. After all, it cannot be disputed that a remarkable upsurge of enthusiasm has appeared for books and training seminars that offer a wide variety of sensory awareness techniques.

Ironically, it is precisely here that we see one of the clearest examples of what has been described as the dilemma of the modern era—the mind/body split—a phrase that by now elicits little more than a yawn since it has become just one more cliché of our times.

Yet as we pay closer attention to some of the more recent attempts to “heal this split”—through invoking a deeper appreciation and affirmation of the body’s role in our life—we see once again that it turns into the same old song. It is still the mind at work.

For it is the mind that conceptualizes the problem in the first place. And it is the mind that then proceeds to orchestrate one or another program to alleviate this problem.

Once again then, we find that even with such subtle techniques as “listening to the body,” or “following the breath,” or coming to a more “global sensation” of the body, that the implementation of these techniques is undertaken *by permission* of the mind. And oddly enough, this continues to escape our notice. It is the mind that still holds the baton.

Very rarely do we come upon a truly reciprocal relation, in which there is a sharing of awareness between body and mind—as co-partners. Yet it is precisely this state of rapport with our earthly companion, that provides an indispensable foundation for the real work of self-study and self-awakening. And as we become more practiced in this way of relating to the body, something interesting occurs. We find that the living presence of this being begins to make itself known to us through its emanations—which we experience as sensation or sensory awareness—and that this enables us to *partake* of the body’s own field of awareness. Not as *object* to the mind, but as *subject* within its own sphere of influence and awareness.

We realize then that we are no longer associated with a “body.” Rather, that we are in the presence of a

living being, a being with whom we *share* the journey towards spiritual awakening.

What is extraordinary about this way of approaching the body is that the experience of it seems so natural. It is also *pragmatic* in that it has the effect of freeing the attention from its usual deep identification with the tensions (and thus from the physical, mental and emotional habits that are supported by these tensions).

We discover then that this dynamic state of rapport with our living partner grounds us; it grounds our work. Instead of dreaming of the work of spiritual transformation, we live the work. And because we are thus grounded, we become thereby more receptive to the help from above that is always available to transform us—whenever the inner conditions allow this lawfully to take place.

In an exchange that took place in New York in 1924, following a demonstration of the movements, Gurdjieff addressed the question: “What place do art and creative work occupy in your teaching?”

You saw our movements and dances. But all you saw was the outer form—beauty, technique. But I do not like the external side you see. For me, art is a means for harmonious development. In everything we do the underlying idea is to do what cannot be done automatically and without thought...

If our aim is a harmonious development of man, then for us, dances and movements are a means of combining the mind and the feeling with movements of the body and manifesting them together. In all things, we have the aim to develop something which cannot be developed directly or mechanically—which interprets the whole man: mind, body, and feeling.

The second purpose of dances is study...

Thus movements have two aims: study and development.¹

In light of Gurdjieff’s response one may begin to appreciate—at a deeper level of engagement—that the attention does have the inherent capacity to come into closer and more intimate proximity with this entity we call the body, and, through an attitude of study, to acknowledge the reality of its living presence experienced as a vital member of our total psycho-physical-spiritual being, revealing thereby its capacity to serve a noble and conscious endeavor, the endeavor of “combining the mind and the feelings with movements of the body and manifesting them together.”

~ • ~

¹ *Views from the Real World: Early Talks of Gurdjieff*, p. 183, from the Chapter “Questions and Answers on Art, etc., New York, February 29, 1924.”

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In 1955, Don Hoyt became a member of the [Gurdjieff Foundation](#) under the guidance of [Lord Pentland](#). During the subsequent years, together with several other senior people, he was responsible for the work of movements classes. After Lord Pentland's death in 1984, Don Hoyt served as President of the Gurdjieff Foundation of California until 1988.

[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

The Music Has To Like You...

Quotations of Mitchell Rudzinski as recollected by his students



Music consists of vibrations that are not from the earth. It is an expression of energy—increasing tension and decreasing, relaxing, “coming home.” When the “return home” is delayed too much, the music becomes sentimental.

Music is patterns, like wallpaper. Some wallpaper makes people tense, some is more relaxing. Pattern in music is a movement away from balance, collecting energy—which can also be seen as an increase of tension—and the movement toward balance, releasing or expressing energy. Balancing can be seen as a relaxation which follows the accumulation of force.

Meaning is found in the relationship of tension to relaxation and can be experienced through arrangements of rhythm, harmony, and melody. We need to be aware of the gathering and discharge of energy when we listen to music.

Harmony, melody, and rhythm—if they all come to balance at the same time, there is a stop. In order

to keep the music moving, at least one element needs to *not* come to balance.

You have the opportunity to express a rhythm, to find the rhythm, even when you are gardening. It's there. Life is living in us. We don't have to do it.

A metronome just measures *space* between the two points limiting the pendulum of the electric circuit. It doesn't measure *time*. It forces something artificial.

Each register on the piano has its own tempo because of the differences in the time the sound waves take to complete themselves. The pianist has to be aware of the tempo of each octave, each world, and has to resonate and move the hands with the tempo of that world. To keep a steady tempo it is necessary to go against the natural law (the length of the wave).

Harmony brings the color.

Each harmonic relationship has a meaning. You need to get to know that. When I started working in this way, I felt that each cell in me was being filled: all the spaces were being filled with these vibrations.

When improvising for the Movements, melody must come from the harmony—otherwise you're just “noodling.”

It begins in the mind—I hit the keys, I get the impressions, and only then does the music become a reality. Playing for Movements cannot be done by ear. We need knowledge.

“Inspiration” can be defined as rhythm, melody, and harmony all coming together. It happens in certain moments and then it is gone again. That is why we cannot depend on inspiration to play for Movements.

Write out lots of examples to avoid getting into a rut with your improvising.

We need to get this material into our fingers so we don't have to think so much about it—then we can be open—the music can come into us.

The music has to *like* you and then you can do anything to it: hit it, push it around. The music has to *like* you ... you need to *like* every one of the 88 keys.

Play the keys as if the keys themselves weren't there—no hesitation on the key surface. Play as if you were conducting. Play the melody as if you were singing it or playing on the violin—sustain the tone. Don't play cautiously or humbly. The *music* will humble you. Don't go *into* the music—sit back from it and *let it come into you*.

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Mitchell Rudzinski (1922–2001) received a Master's degree from Chicago Musical College, attended the American University of Biarritz, France, and studied composition with Max Wald and Paul Held. He joined the [Gurdjieff Foundation](#) in New York in the early 1950s where he learned to play for the Movements from Annette Herter. In 1970 he moved to San Francisco, where he taught students of the Movements music for the next 30 years. The legacy of some of his teaching can be found in a private publication entitled A Study of Piano Improvisation. These examples of Mitchell Rudzinski's advice and comments to his students have been provided from their journals and notebooks.

SHAPE

The image shows handwritten musical notation. The first system is a single staff with the word 'SHAPE' written above it. It contains a sequence of chords and notes. The second system is a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with the title 'SLOW DANCE' written above it. It includes a tempo marking '♩ = 60' and a 3/4 time signature. The notation consists of several measures with notes and chords. The final system is a grand staff with the instruction 'D.C.' and the text 'SAME HARMONY AS WOMEN'S DANCE BUT ARRANGED IN REVERSE!' written below the notes.

SLOW DANCE

♩ = 60

D.C. SAME HARMONY AS WOMEN'S DANCE BUT ARRANGED IN REVERSE!

A handwritten musical manuscript on a single staff. The notation begins with a treble clef and a common time signature (C). The first measure contains a quarter note on G4, followed by a quarter rest. The second measure contains a quarter note on A4, followed by a quarter rest. The third measure contains a quarter note on B4, followed by a quarter rest. The fourth measure contains a quarter note on C5, followed by a quarter rest. The piece concludes with a double bar line. Above the staff, the handwritten text "BUT ARRANGED IN REVERSE!" is written in all caps. Below the staff, the date "JUNE 1989" is written in all caps. Below the staff are two additional empty staves.

Manuscript for exercise, p. 123, in *A Study of Piano Improvisation*.

On Giving up the Luxury of Knowing

by Stafford Ordahl



Mr. Gurdjieff is reported to have said, “Every phenomenon has seven aspects.” In discussing the effort of playing for Mr. Gurdjieff’s Movements, I would like to confine myself to one aspect: State.

Does this sound familiar? Earlier today I had an argument with a friend, this afternoon my boss told me there will be no raise this year, and just now, the Movements instructor didn’t acknowledge me when I walked into the room. To make matters worse, he now announces he wants to start with a movement for which there is no music—I have to improvise. How can I find corresponding music in my state? Suddenly, I go from feeling down to feeling fear.

Where do I go to find what I need? To my head, of course. It’s like going to the attic of my house and rummaging around in the trunks up there to find something that will do.

But the head’s contribution is simply not enough. I need the attention of the other parts to play for movements. The body actually, physically, plays the piano, but is tense in response to the emotions which are cranked up in fear. The feeling is the only part of me that is subtle enough to perceive the

Movement but it is not available to me right now.

These are hardly the ideal conditions for expressing the Sacred.

I begin to play—from my head—and the music is stale, dead and routine. The instructor looks over at me, which only serves to make me clutch up all the more.

What to do?

Why am I afraid? Because I feel inadequate to the situation. But the fact is I *am* inadequate. Gurdjieff's Movements exist on a level far above me, and so does appropriate music. Any attempt to correspond from my level by "doing" anything is doomed to failure. And, yet here I go again, resorting to my bag of tricks.

I'm inadequate to the demand, not only because I'm in a negative state, but also because I'm stuck in my vain attempts to "find" something from what I "know."

I have often heard of the Unknown; I've read books about it, and even purport to be in favor of it. So now, here it is, right in front of me. I don't know what music would be appropriate. I don't know how to produce something appropriate. I don't even know how to bring the whole of myself to the situation: I'm truly in front of the Unknown. And I'm trying everything I can think of to get away from it.

The poet Robert Frost wrote, "two roads diverged in a wood. I took the one less traveled by." I am at a fork in the road as I sit there playing my dead music. One road—the one I usually take—goes toward the Known, the other—"less traveled by"—goes toward the Unknown. What would induce me to take this "other road?"

First of all, I have to be convinced that the road I'm on is unsatisfactory, and this may take many years. But I won't make the choice of seeking the "other road" unless I'm truly desperate.

Second, I have to have the courage to fail. There is no way to go into the Unknown while keeping one foot in the Known; it's all or nothing. The Sufi image is throwing oneself into the flames.

Third, I have to be able to relax. All my dubious "self-control" is bound up in an ancient network of tensions that seems to come into play by itself. So I have to relax in the midst of action, while I'm afraid, while the Movement is going on, while I'm playing my habitual drivel in A minor.

Fourth, I have to be able to attend. The head must be clear, and glued to the class. I must be there with the class, with each footfall, with each position.

But I came into the class in a negative state. How do I get to a place where I can even make these efforts?

In an essay on attention, Thomas de Hartmann describes how a certain dog never took his attention off his two young masters. Never. As he said, “This is already a high degree of attention ... much stronger than many humans have.”¹

I too have noticed the attention of dogs. Up and down the avenues of New York, in front of every grocery store or coffee shop, dogs of all sizes and descriptions are tied up waiting for their masters to come out. Nothing distracts them. Their eyes are glued on that door. Why? Is it will? Is it wish? They’re dogs, after all. Do dogs have will or wish? In my opinion, it’s love. Their beloved is behind that door, and love directs their attention. Love keeps it there.

And it is the same with us; what we love draws our attention.

As I sit there, locked in fear and playing pap, what do I love? What am I concerned about? If I am very honest, I see that in one way or another, I’m concerned with myself: my self-image, my self-love, my vanity. What concerns me most is, “How am I doing? What do people think? How can I shine?”

To love the Movement is a very high aim. For now, at least I strive to *care* about it. I’m here for that: to bring music that helps the Movement come to life, that helps the class know how to move. They should feel that my music supports them, as if the music were under them, carrying them. And so, if I bring my attention entirely on the Movement in this way, suddenly I hear the sounds that I’m producing. I hear their inappropriateness and begin to care about that, too. I see that the sounds are my means for caring for the Movement and the class.

Suddenly, without my “doing” anything but paying attention, my feeling is called to join in the effort, and the body follows.

So, if “all” my attention is on the Movement and the sound, rather than my self, who is it that comes up with the music?

I have to trust something else in myself. But trust what? And how do I find it? Trust means not asking “what.” Does the baby look with suspicion at the mother’s breast? Does the flower look askance at the sun? And asking “how to find it” is another trick of the head, trying, as always, to maintain control. The head can’t know anything about this. What is needed is in the Unknown. I don’t find it, it finds me, and it comes by itself. Not because I “find” it or “want” it or even deserve it, but because I need it. I have thrown myself on the flames.

But putting all my attention (or care) on the Movement and the sound and letting “something else” create the music—even for a second—shows me immediately what I am up against. “Not knowing” is extremely unsettling. The urge for the head to take over is almost irresistible.

Giving up the need to know—taking this “other road”—is the price to pay if I wish to produce alive, fresh, creative, new, touching (and most importantly, corresponding) music.

Mr. Gurdjieff says that we have to pay in advance. The musician has to give up the luxury of knowing in advance. This is his payment.

This is also true for playing the written music. It must be played as if I don't know what's coming, again trusting "something else" to inform my playing.

So, I am in front of a great paradox. The music is coming from me, but I'm not "doing" it. I have to be relaxed, and at the same time, I have to be very much there, attending to what needs my attention: the class, the sound, the Movement.

As Madame de Salzman once said: "You can't do it, but it won't be done without you."

~ • ~

¹ ["Attention—Wish—Will—Free Will: A talk by Mr. de Hartmann: From the Diary Notes of Thomas C. Daly."](#) *Gurdjieff International Review*, Vol. II (4), Summer 1999, pp. 34–35.

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Stafford Ordahl joined the [Gurdjieff Foundation](#) in New York in 1960, where he was a member of [Dr. and Mrs. William Welch's](#) group. Soon thereafter, he began his studies of playing the Gurdjieff/de Hartmann music and playing for the Movements with Mrs. Annette Herter (a pupil of Gurdjieff and [Thomas de Hartmann](#)). In the early 1970s, he studied with Yvette Grimaud, who accompanied the Movements in Paris. In recent years, Ordahl has participated in public concerts of the Gurdjieff/de Hartmann music in Miami, Toronto, Phoenix, and New York. He travels frequently to various cities in the United States and abroad to share his understanding of the work on music.



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Behind the Visible Movement

Quotations as recollected by her pupils

[Jeanne de Salzmänn](#) (1889–1990) studied piano, composition, and orchestral conducting at the Conservatory of Geneva. Dancer and teacher of rhythmic movements, she was a pupil of Emile-Jaques Dalcroze who opened an avant-garde institute of the arts devoted to music, dance, and theater in Germany in 1912. During the Russian revolution, she and her husband Alexandre were living in Tiflis, Georgia, where she opened a school of dance and music. In 1919 the composer Thomas de Hartmann introduced the young couple to Gurdjieff.

In the years that followed, Jeanne de Salzmänn became Gurdjieff's devoted pupil, and remained with him until his death in 1949. For more than forty years thereafter, she worked tirelessly to transmit his teaching and to preserve the inner content and meaning of the Movements. Here are some quotations as recollected by her pupils:

~ • ~

Behind the visible movement there is another movement, one which cannot be seen, which is very strong, on which the outer movement depends. If this inner movement were not so strong, the outer one would not have any action.

~ • ~

You must constantly divide your attention between something which is higher than yourself and your movement. You always lose yourself in one or the other. As soon as you stop making this effort, you become identified with the movement.

You must consider these Movements as a condition, an exceptional one given to you to work on your attention.

In so dividing your attention, you are filling the place that you can fill. One day you may be capable of more, but today, this is your place.

You do not realize enough that your attention is your only chance. Without it you can do nothing.

Usually you think about your movement, but you do not do it. You maintain your thought on the movement, and then when it is the time to do it you give up, and the movement is done, no matter how, without you.

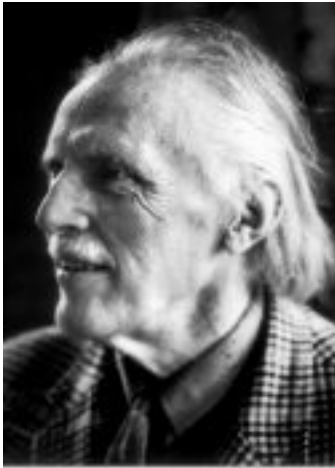
~ • ~

The thought must have its own center of gravity; it cannot just be either here or there. We must find this center of gravity. It is the same for the body; if it is not centered, no movement will be possible. It is the same for the feeling.

These Movements are designed to enable us to pass from one center of gravity to another; it is the shift that creates the state. The gesture, the movement, is what is important, not the attitudes.

~ • ~

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

John G. Bennett

1897–1974

John G. Bennett was a British scientist, mathematician, and philosopher who integrated scientific research with studies of Asiatic languages and religions. Born on June 8, 1897, Bennett travelled widely and worked with many spiritual leaders. While in Constantinople in 1921—during the aftermath of the Great War and the Russian Revolution—he met both G. I. Gurdjieff and [P. D. Ouspensky](#). These meetings shaped the direction of his spiritual development and in the summer of 1923, he spent three months at [Gurdjieff's Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man](#) in France. In spite of the shortness of his stay, Bennett was shown things that convinced him that man is capable of spiritual transformation and that Gurdjieff had profound knowledge and understanding of the techniques by which this could be achieved. Soon thereafter, Bennett returned to England and worked with Ouspensky's groups for the next fifteen years. Then, in the summer of 1949, he spent a month working very intensively with Gurdjieff in Paris, and this experience laid the foundation for a significant transformation in his life. J. G. Bennett died on December 13, 1974, leaving a legacy of selfless giving and unrelenting inquiry into the mystery and meaning of existence.

[John G. Bennett: The Struggle to “Make Something” for Oneself](#)

George Bennett (John Bennett's son) recounts the different influences that shaped his father's search. He recognizes the life-long impact Ouspensky and particularly Gurdjieff had on John Bennett and describes how Gurdjieff's influence shaped the groups Bennett led during the last twenty-five years of his life.

[Gurdjieff's *All and Everything*: a Study by J. G. Bennett](#)

Bennett's study was first published in *Rider's Review* (Autumn 1950), London, and is reprinted here with the kind permission of [Bennett Books](#). Bennett grapples with the contradiction of trying to elucidate a “book that defies verbal analysis” and concludes that *Beelzebub's Tales* is an epoch-making work that represents the first new mythology in 4000 years. He finds in Gurdjieff's ideas regarding time, God's purpose in creating the universe, conscience, and the suffering of God, a synthesis transcending Eastern and Western doctrines about humanity's place in the cosmos.

[Gurdjieff's Temple Dances](#)

John G. Bennett describes the “Temple Dances” Gurdjieff was teaching his pupils in Constantinople in 1920 and at the Prieuré in 1923.

[Bennett Organizations](#)

There are several organizations associated with the teaching of J. G. Bennett.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Peter D. Ouspensky

1878–1947

P. D. Ouspensky was a major contributor to Twentieth century ideas. He anticipated many of the key questions in philosophy, psychology and religion that have driven and informed us throughout the century. Born in Moscow and raised by an artistic and intellectual family, Ouspensky refused to follow conventional academic training. While employed as a journalist, his extensive travels, personal studies, and a quest for the miraculous resulted in the publication of his brilliant *Tertium Organum* in 1912. He studied intensively with G. I. Gurdjieff between 1915 and 1918. Throughout the rest of his life, Ouspensky continued to promote Gurdjieff's system as the practical study of methods for developing consciousness. He lived unobtrusively in England after 1921, exerting considerable influence among writers, conducting his own study groups and publishing *The New Model of the Universe* in 1931. In 1940, he moved to the United States with some of his London pupils and continued lecturing until his death in 1947, shortly after returning to England.

[P. D. Ouspensky by John Pentland](#)

First published in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* edited by Mircea Eliade (1987) New York: Macmillan, Volume 11, pp. 143–144, Pentland's sketch offers a succinct and original synopsis of Ouspensky's contributions as an independent thinker and writer and as a leading exponent of Gurdjieff's teaching.

[P. D. Ouspensky: a Biographical Outline](#)

This informed biographical outline was first published in *Remembering Pytor Demianovich Ouspensky* (1978) a brochure compiled by Merrily E. Taylor and is reproduced with the kind permission of the Manuscripts and Archives Division at Yale University Library.

[Ouspensky](#)

Christopher Fremantle—a former pupil of Peter Ouspensky—provides an informed synopsis of

Ouspensky's importance as a philosopher and exponent of Gurdjieff's teaching.

[In Anti-Bolshevist Russia](#)

An article by journalist Carl Eric Bechhofer Roberts first published in *The New Age* (Jan 6, 1921) London: XXVIII (10), p. 113, and later in *In Denikin's Russia and the Caucasus, 1919–1920*. Stranded in the midst of the Russian revolution, the author stays several days in a barn with Ouspensky and Zaharov, another of Gurdjieff's students. Over a bottle of vodka, Ouspensky engagingly relates some of his light-hearted Moscow and Essentuki adventures.

[Black Sheep Philosophers: Gurdjieff—Ouspensky—Orage](#)

An essay by Gorham Munson, a friend and literary colleague of Orage and member of his group in New York for several years. First published a few months after Gurdjieff's death in October 1949, Munson's article offers a concise informed synopsis of Gurdjieff's ideas and biographies of the three men.

[P. D. Ouspensky: a Brief Bibliography](#)

Walter Driscoll surveys the major writings by and about Ouspensky, and highlights some additional writings that show his influence.

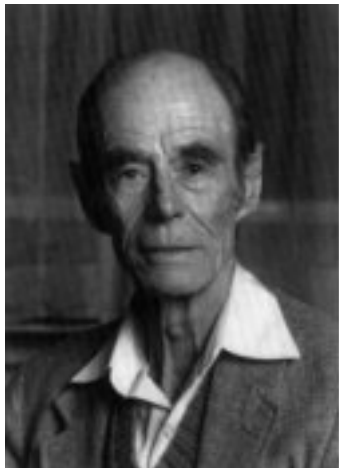
[In Search of the Miraculous](#)

A synopsis by Dr. Jacob Needleman originally presented at the 1980 national meetings of the American Academy of Religion and first published in an expanded form as "Gurdjieff, Ouspensky and Esoteric Philosophy" in *Consciousness and Tradition* (1982) New York: Crossroads. This revision is published with the author's kind permission. Professor Needleman offers a thoroughly considered synopsis of the cosmological and psychological ideas contained in Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous*.

[Around the Theatre: The Voice of Moscow](#)

On the first few pages of *In Search of the Miraculous*, P. D. Ouspensky describes his return to Russia in November of 1914 and how, working as a journalist, he came across this notice and put it in his newspaper that winter, shortly before his first meeting with Gurdjieff.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

John Pentland

1907–1984

Lord Pentland (Henry John Sinclair) was a pupil of Ouspensky for many years during the 1930s and 1940s. He began to study intensely with Gurdjieff in 1948. Gurdjieff then appointed him to lead the Work in North America. He became president of the [Gurdjieff Foundation](#) when it was established in New York in 1953 and remained in that position until his death.

[Lord Pentland](#)

A brief sketch of John Pentland's life and writings by J. Walter Driscoll. Pentland was a pupil of both P. D. and Mme. Ouspensky for many years during the 1930s and 1940s. He spent considerable time with Gurdjieff in 1949, after which he led the Gurdjieff Work in North America.

[P. D. Ouspensky by John Pentland](#)

First published in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* edited by Mircea Eliade (1987) New York: Macmillan, Volume 11, pp. 143–144, Pentland's sketch offers a succinct and original synopsis of Ouspensky's contributions as an independent thinker and writer and as a leading exponent of Gurdjieff's teaching.

[Commentary on *Exchanges Within*](#)

A review of John Pentland's, *Exchanges Within*. A long-time student of John Pentland, Dennis Lewis points out Pentland's "remarkable ability to *translate* Gurdjieff's teachings into the exact language needed to help each seeker experience herself or himself as a living question in the face of the unknown."

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Annotated Bibliography of this Site, by Author

This page depicts an annotated bibliography for works referenced within this site. For a complete listing of all G. I. Gurdjieff literature, see [Gurdjieff, an annotated bibliography](#).

[Anderson, Margaret](#)

- *My Thirty Years' War: An Autobiography* (1930) New York: Covici, Friede; (1969) New York: Horizon Press

Detailed accounts of Anderson's experiences with Mr. Gurdjieff and his teaching.

- *The Unknowable Gurdjieff* (1962) New York: Weiser; (1962) London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

"In this book I shall write of what he [Gurdjieff] said when I was there to hear him say it; of what he taught us, how he taught it, and what effect it had not only upon me but upon my friends."—from the Introduction

Baker, George

- *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching* (1996) New York: Continuum Press, ISBN 0-8264-0800-1, edited by Jacob Needleman and George Baker

"This volume of essays, interviews, and reminiscences, originally published in France in 1992, offers new perspectives on a unique figure whose influence as a teacher and spiritual master has continued to grow throughout the twentieth century." —from the Introduction

[Bennett, John G.](#)

- ***Gurdjieff: A Very Great Enigma*** (1963) New York: Samuel Weiser, Inc., ISBN 0-87728-216-1

Three lectures delivered during the summer of 1963. The first lecture acquaints the reader with the incredible environment of Gurdjieff's boyhood. The second is devoted to the sources of Gurdjieff's ideas. The third lecture deals with Gurdjieff's teachings and methods.

- ***Idiots in Paris*** (1980) Gloucestershire: Coombe Springs Press

The diaries of John and Elizabeth Bennett reflecting their meetings with Gurdjieff in 1949.

- ***What Are We Living For?*** (1991) Santa Fe: Bennett Books, ISBN 0-9621901-8-7

"There are signs today that a new current is beginning to appear, here and there, in the thinking of humanity at large. Shocked by an unavoidable seeing of the condition that the world has been brought to, the complacency of some of us has cracked. It is no longer possible to go on passively 'hoping for the best' while remaining as we are. Still, what could guide us to real change in values and attitudes? What is the required change in our thinking and feeling, even in our very nature?" —from the Foreword by A. L. Staveley

Collin [Smith], Rodney

- ***The Theory of Celestial Influence: Man, the Universe, and Cosmic Mystery***. London: Vincent Stuart, 1954, 392p., index; New York: Weiser, 1971, 393p.; Boston: Shambhala, 1984, 392p.; London & New York: Arkana, 1993, 392p.

Daumal, René

- ***Mount Analogue: An Authentic Narrative*** (1959) London: Vincent Stuart; ***A Novel of Symbolically Authentic Non-Euclidean Adventures in Mountain Climbing*** (1960) New York: Pantheon; (1974) San Francisco: City Lights Books; (1975) Baltimore: Penguin Books

The unfinished masterpiece of the French writer and the apotheosis of his lifetime search. Allegorically describes a group of men and women searching out and ascending the sacred mountain together. A richly poetical statement of Daumal's experience of Gurdjieff's teaching.

Driscoll, J. Walter

- ***Gurdjieff, An Annotated Bibliography*** (1985) New York: Garland Publishing, 363 pages, by J. Walter Driscoll and the Gurdjieff Foundation of California

Contains an essay on the Gurdjieff literature by [Michel de Salzman](#), descriptive entries on all of Gurdjieff's published writings and music, descriptive entries followed by succinct annotations for 1108 English and 597 French items (mostly books, essays and articles) about Gurdjieff, and ends with a 40 page title index. Out of print since 1994, this comprehensive and definitive work offers exhaustive bibliographies on several of Gurdjieff's prominent pupils; J. G. Bennett, Maurice Nicoll, A. R. Orage, P. D. Ouspensky and others. J. Walter Driscoll has been at work on the [second edition](#) of the Gurdjieff bibliography since 1994. An interim selective bibliography containing descriptions of 82 key books, supplemented by a bibliographic essay and descriptions of Gurdjieff's writings is available as [Gurdjieff: a Reading Guide](#). The second comprehensive edition will follow in a few years.

Everitt, Luba Gurdjieff

- *Luba Gurdjieff: A Memoir with Recipes* (1993) Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, ISBN 0-89815-360-3, with Marina Bear

"Here is an intimate glimpse of this fascinating household—patriarchal, charming, demanding, and enlightening all at once. At the Prieuré, Luba also learned the secrets of the kitchen for which she was adored in the years to come. As owner of Luba's Bistro, a landmark on London's social scene for over three decades, she served everyone from starving artists to royalty with her generous heart and hearty fare." —from the Cover

Fremantle, Christopher

- *On Attention: talks, essays, and letters to his pupils* (1993) Denville, NJ: Indications Press; Collected and edited by Lillian Firestone Boal; ISBN 0-9639100-0-0

"When Jeanne de Salzman, Gurdjieff's successor, asked some of the older people who had worked with Gurdieff to write about the work, Fremantle began to dictate notes on the aspects he had explored. These notes were read aloud at meetings of his groups, and are reproduced in this volume." —from the Cover

George, James

- *Asking for the Earth: Waking up to the Spiritual/Ecological Crisis*. Shaftsbury, Dorset: Element, 1995, 199p., index, bib., notes, ISBN 1-85230-621-1 (pb).

A retired Canadian diplomat and noted environmental activist, George has been a life-long student of Gurdjieff's teaching. He attempts to link Gurdjieff's cosmological ideas with James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis and documents the crisis caused by human degradation of the environment; attributing it to our alienation from a sense of spiritual presence and conscience.

Gurdjieff, G. I.

- [*Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*](#) (1950) New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company; (1950) London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; (1964) E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., Library of Congress No. 50-5848; (1973) E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc. in paperback (3 volumes), SBN 0-525-47348-3, 0-525-47349-1, 0-525-47350-5. Most recently published in 1993 by [Two Rivers Press](#).
- [*Meetings with Remarkable Men*](#) (1963) New York: E. P. Dutton & Co.
- [*Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am"*](#) (1981) New York: Elsevier-Dutton Publishing Company, Inc., Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 81-65602, ISBN: 0-525-14547-8.
- *The Herald of Coming Good: First Appeal to Contemporary Humanity* (1933) Paris: Privately printed; (1971) New York: Weiser.
- [*Views from the Real World*](#) (1973) New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. Inc., Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 73-10482, ISBN: 0-525-22870-5.

[Hartmann, Thomas](#) and [Olga de](#)

- *Our Life with Mr Gurdjieff: Definitive Edition* (1992) Edited by T. C. Daly and T. A. Daly, London: Penguin Arkana, 277p.

The de Hartmann's were devoted to Gurdjieff. Their poignant, account of the years 1915 to 1930 has become a classic of the Gurdjieff literature and gone through three editions. It vividly describes their discoveries as students in Gurdjieff's early St Petersburg group, their perilous escape with him from the Russian revolution and their struggle with Gurdjieff and his teaching in Europe. An accomplished composer, Thomas de Hartmann notated several hundred of Gurdjieff's musical compositions between 1925 and 1927. He later arranged and recorded several dozen of these on piano. Olga de Hartmann was Gurdjieff's personal assistant for many of these years; she managed daily life at his Institute in Fontainebleau. As his secretary, she recorded the earliest drafts of his writings. The de Hartmann's left Gurdjieff in 1929 but remained dedicated to his teaching and became major figures in its transmission.

[Heap, Jane](#)

- *The Notes of Jane Heap* (1983) Aurora: [Two Rivers Press](#)

"These notes were for Jane's own use. She left no instructions for their future. We, under

leadership of Michael Currer-Briggs, assembled them and have now made this short selection."
—from the Introduction

- *Notes* (1983) Aurora: Two Rivers Press

"[These notes] contain a great volume of material, a small selection of which is now presented for study, in the way it was given, for the practical direction of those wishing to follow the search for knowledge, understanding and development." —from the Introduction by Michael Currer-Briggs

Heyneman, Martha

- *The Breathing Cathedral: Feeling Our Way into a Living Cosmos* (1993) San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, ISBN 0-87156-687-7

"Martha Heyneman invites us to join her in an exploration of a multitude of far-reaching ideas including the question of humankind's place in the universe, the function of quarks and photons, and the nature of evolution and transformation." —from the Cover by Ellen Dooling Draper

- [*The Disenchantment of the Dragon*](#) (1979) Toronto: A Journal of Our Time, No. 2, 1979

This essay is reproduced here with the kind permission of the author and of the publisher Bob McWhinney. An inspiring essay by Martha Heyneman that links the symbolic structures of the Arthurian legend cycle and mythic elements underlying *Beelzebub's Tales* to reveal the necessity of transforming rather than slaying the Dragon.

[Hulme, Kathryn](#)

- *Undiscovered Country: A Spiritual Adventure* (1966) Boston/Toronto: Little, Brown, and Company, Library of Congress Catalog No. 66-22679; (1972) Boston/Toronto: Little, Brown, and Company; (1997) Lexington: [Natural Bridge Editions](#), ISBN 1891218034

"Kathryn Hulme's *Undiscovered Country* is the classic account of a group of women ... who put their careers on hold to study privately with the spiritual teacher G. I. Gurdjieff. Known as 'the Rope,' this group included three writer/editors, a wealthy San Francisco milliner, a legendary French soprano, an actress/theatrical manager, and a prim British spinster. Hulme's lively account of their relationship with each other and to the unconventional guide who led them into an 'undiscovered country' of self-observation has long been considered one of the finest documents ever published about the enigmatic and elusive individual who was Gurdjieff." —from the Cover

King, C. Daly

- *The Butterfly: A Symbol of Conscious Evolution* (1996) New York: [Bridge Press](#), ISBN 0-9651754-0-5; Originally published as *Beyond Behaviorism, The Future of Psychology* (1927) New York: Robert Courtney Grant Publications

With an Introduction by Terry Winter Owens. "Inspired by the Gurdjieff ideas, this long-lost treasure predates Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous* by over two decades... this remarkable book is one of the earliest about the Gurdjieff ideas. Its historic significance is unique among the now-abundant writings about Gurdjieff." —from the Cover

- *The Oragean Version* (1951) New York: Privately printed in a limited edition of 100 copies, 289 p., index

Convinced that [A. R. Orage](#)'s presentation was an undistorted version of an ancient teaching that would be irretrievably lost after Orage's death, King presents a rigorous and detailed formulation of material he gathered over several years of close study with Orage. Pages 257 to 269 contain King's rendering of 118 aphorisms by Orage.

- *The States of Human Consciousness* (1963) New York: University Books

Examines the levels of consciousness potentially available to man. In his introduction, "The Origins of the Investigation," King describes his relationship to Orage and Gurdjieff, whom he calls "one of the hundred, perhaps one of the fifty, most remarkable men known to us in our history."

- *The Psychology of Consciousness* (1932) London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 256p. (1932) New York: Harcourt Brace

King argues that consciousness is not an accidental by-product, but the chief goal of living. The first half of the book attempts to deduce the theoretical nature of consciousness and the second half introduces techniques to reach higher states of consciousness.

Lewis, Cecil

- *All My Yesterdays: an autobiography* (1993) Shaftesbury: Element Books, 210p.

Mairet, Philip

- *A. R. Orage: a Memoir* (1936) London: J. M. Dent, 132 p. (1966) New Hyde Park, N.Y:

University Books, 140p., index, Revised with a new introduction by Philip Mairet

Mairet furnishes a discerning account of his friend's life as an influential literary and social figure. He recounts a significant anecdote about a discussion between Gurdjieff and Orage about having an aim. When asked about his "whim" or true desire, Gurdjieff responded that "it was to live and teach so that there should be a new conception of God in the world, a change in the very meaning of the word."

Moore, James

- *Gurdjieff: the Anatomy of a Myth* (1991) Element Books Ltd, 415P, ISBN 1-85230-114-7

"In this first major biography of Gurdjieff, James Moore draws on published and unpublished sources, and on a lifetime's personal contact with his subject's senior pupils. The sheer drive of the narrative line imparts to the book its best qualities of a novel. Through the humanity and dry humour of his writing and through a scholarship evidenced in an unprecedented note section, Moore offers the reader an entertaining and reliable introduction to one of the most remarkable men on this century." —from the Cover

Munson, Gorham

- *The Awakening Twenties: a memoir-history of a literary period* (1985) Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985, 317p., index

A professional writer, Munson lived in New York's Greenwich Village when it truly was a new bohemia. This account of several major literary figures of the period includes an enthusiastic chapter on "Orage in America" and a description of Munson's month at Fontainebleau with Gurdjieff.

Jacob Needleman

- *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching* (1996) New York: Continuum Press, ISBN 0-8264-0800-1, edited by Jacob Needleman and George Baker

"This volume of essays, interviews, and reminiscences, originally published in France in 1992, offers new perspectives on a unique figure whose influence as a teacher and spiritual master has continued to grow throughout the twentieth century." —from the Introduction

Nicoll, Maurice

- *The New Man: An Interpretation of Some Parables and Miracles of Christ* (1950) London:

Stuart & Richard; (1951) New York: Hermitage House; (1972) Penguin; (1981) London: Watkins

A revolutionary exploration of the esoteric meaning and psychological power of Christ's parables. Nicoll demonstrates that the language of scripture is precisely designed to awaken man from sleep. The central ideas of temptation, righteousness, wisdom, and prayer are recast in this light.

- *Simple Explanations of Work Ideas* (1993) York: Quacks Books, ISBN 0-948333-31-6

A great introduction to the work and teaching of Gurdjieff. "These simple explanations of work ideas by Dr. Maurice Nicoll will be helpful to others who may be wondering what "The Work" is about." —from Beryl Pogson's papers based on the teachings of G.I Gurdjieff & P. D. Ouspensky

Nott, C. Stanley

- *Teachings of Gurdjieff: The Journal of a Pupil* (1961) London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; (1962) New York: Samuel Weiser, ISBN 0-87728-106-8

Based on diary notes, this personal account of the author's early years with Gurdjieff and Orage in France and New York includes an edited version of Nott's notes of Orage's commentaries on *Beelzebub's Tales*.

- *Further Teachings of Gurdjieff: Journey Through This World* (1969) London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; (1969) New York: Samuel Weiser, ISBN 0-87728-396-6

At the Prieuré, Nott experienced sustained and intense periods on inner work under Gurdjieff's direction. He chronicles his difficult re-entry into the world of business, and his experience at Putney School, Vermont, and at the Taliesin Fellowship in Wisconsin.

Nyland, Willem A.

- *Index to "Beelzebub's Tales"* (no date) New York: Warwick, Mimeographed typescript

Probably the most comprehensive index to [Beelzebub's Tales](#) ever assembled. Currently unavailable outside of Mr. Nyland's groups.

- *Firefly I & II* (1965) New York: Warwick, Mimeographed typescripts

Mr. Nyland's personal statement about Work after forty years of association with Gurdjieff.

Currently unavailable outside of Mr. Nyland's groups.

Orage, Alfred R.

- [*Readers and Writers \(1917-1921\)*](#) (1922) New York: Knopf, 181p. index.

Orage was editor of thirty volumes of the enormously influential journal the *New Age* between 1907 until 1922. Under the title of "Readers and Writers", he contributed a wealth of essays, articles and editorial comment of which this anthology reproduces 78 items.

- *The Active Mind: Adventures in Awareness* (1930) London: The Janus Press; Also published as *Psychological Exercises* (1930) New York: Farrar & Rinehart, New York: Hermitage House, 1954, 122p.; Revised and subsequently published as *Psychological Exercises and Essays* (1965) London: Janus Press, 1965, 121p., ISBN 0-87728-129-7,; and as *The Active Mind: Psychological Exercises and Essays* (1965) New York: Weiser, 121p.; The essays were first published as "Fifteen Exercises in Practical Psychology" in *Psychology Magazine* (New York) between April 1925 and January 1926.

About one hundred thirty psychological exercises to focus mental, vocal and visual acuity. These are complimented by fifteen essays on such topics as "The control of temper," "How to read men," "On dying daily," "Economizing our energy," and "Are we awake?"

- *Essays and Aphorisms* (1954) London: Janus Press, 55p., Limited edition of 1000 copies with a biographical note by C. S. Nott and containing the essays "On Love," "On Religion," "What is the Soul?" and "Talks with Katherine Mansfield at Fontainebleau"; Subsequently published under the title *On Love: with some aphorisms and other essays* (1957) London: Janus Press, 72p. (1966) New York: Weiser, 72p.

The four essays in this collection reflect the depth of Gurdjieff's influence on Orage. C. S. Nott edited the aphorisms from his personal notes on Orage's talks to Gurdjieff groups between 1924 and 1930.

- *On Love & Psychological Exercises* (1998) York Beach: Samuel Weiser.

Both the previous titles, separately paged in one paperback volume.

- *Orage's Commentary on 'Beelzebub'*, First published in *Teachings of Gurdjieff: the journal of a pupil; an account of some years with G. I. Gurdjieff and A. R. Orage in New York and at Fontainebleau-Avon* (1961) London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 254p. (1962) New York: Weiser, 230p., index., by C. S. Nott, The Weiser edition was issued with the variant subtitle *A Pupil's Journal* after 1978. Also issued in a variant edition as *A.R. Orage's Commentaries on G. I. Gurdjieff's "ALL and EVERYTHING: Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson."* (1985) Aurora:

Two Rivers Press, 136p., edited by C. S. Nott with an introduction by A. L. Staveley.

Orage was largely responsible, under Gurdjieff's close direction, for rendering *Beelzebub's Tales* into articulate English. Nott's personal notes, compiled over several years, provide a detailed record of Orage's illuminating commentaries.

Ouspensky, Peter D.

- ***Tertium Organum: The Third Canon of Thought, a Key to the Enigmas of the World.*** Translated from the Russian by Nicholas Bessaraboff and Claude Bragdon. Rochester, N.Y.: Manas Press, 1920, 344p.; New York: Knopf, 1922; London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1923, 1934; 3rd American edition, New York: Knopf, 1945, 306p. A revised English translation by Eugenic Kadloubovsky under Ouspensky's supervision, limited edition of 21 copies, Cape Town: Stourton Press, 1950, 192p. ***An Abridgement of P. D. Ouspensky's 'Tertium Organum'***, by Fairfax Hall, Cape Town: Stourton Press, 1961, 276p.; revised translation by E. Kadloubovsky and the author, New York: Knopf, 1981, 298p., index.

Ouspensky's experimental efforts to enter higher states of consciousness proved to him that an entirely new mode of thought was needed by modern man, qualitatively different from the two modes (classical and positivistic) that have dominated Western civilization for 2000 years. *Tertium Organum* is a clarion call for such thought, ranging brilliantly over the teachings of Eastern and Western mysticism, sacred art and the theories of modern science. With the publication of *Tertium Organum* in Russian, in 1911, Ouspensky became a widely respected author and lecturer on metaphysical questions. The American translation of *Tertium Organum* in 1920, won him widespread recognition in England and America, where he lived from 1921.

- ***A New Model of the Universe: Principles of the Psychological Method in Its Application to Problems of Science, Religion and Art.*** Translated from the Russian by R. R. Merton, under the supervision of the author. New York: Knopf, 1931; London: Routledge, 1931, 544p.; 2nd revised edition, London: Routledge, 1934; New York: Knopf; 1934; reprinted 1943, 1961, (Knopf) and 1971 (Random House), 476p.; London: Routledge, 1949, 534p.

A collection of twelve wide-ranging and penetrating essays dealing with esotericism, symbolism, science, religion, higher dimensions, evolution, superman, eternal recurrence and other topics that anticipate many of the most significant psycho-spiritual questions of the twentieth-century. Most of these extended essays were published separately in Russian before Ouspensky translated them to English and published this anthology in London in 1931 for the general purpose of attracting those interested in such questions.

- ***Psychological Lectures: 1934–1940.*** Privately printed and distributed. London [1940], 90p., limited edition of 125 copies. Six introductory lectures, issued by Ouspensky's Historico-Psychological Society at 46 Colet Gardens in London. Posthumously published in five lectures

as *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution*. New York: Hedgehog Press, 1950, 98p.; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1951, 95p., index; New York: Knopf, 1954, 114p.; **2nd edition enlarged** [with a preface by John Pentland], New York: Knopf, 1974, 128p. (This edition contains a reprint of the article "Notes on the Decision to Work" and a previously unpublished autobiographical note.) London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978, 95p. (Contains Ouspensky's 1945 introduction.) **3rd edition**, New York: Random House, 1981, 128p. (This edition contains a publisher's note in place of the introductory note written for the 2nd edition. The two selections added to the 2nd edition are replaced by a lecture of Sept. 23, 1937.)

These private introductory lectures were written, not for publication, but to provide Ouspensky's students with an account of the direction his work had taken since the publication of *Tertium Organum* and *A New Model of the Universe*. Ouspensky indicates in his 1945 introduction to these lectures, that they are an invitation to "follow the advice and indications given... which referred chiefly to self-observation and a certain self-discipline." Not simply a synopsis of the knowledge Ouspensky had learned from Gurdjieff, these deeply considered lectures present the author's struggle to transmit a living system in the hope of attracting the supportive attention of the same higher sources from whom Ouspensky believed Gurdjieff had received his teaching.

- ***Strange Life of Ivan Osokin***. Limited edition of 356 copies. London: Stourton, 1947, 179p.; New York and London: Holme, 1947, 166p.; London: Faber & Faber, 1948; New York, Hermitage House, 1955, 166p.; London: Faber & Faber, 1971, 204p.; Baltimore: Penguin, 1971 ("The Penguin Metaphysical Library;" reprinted with a foreword by J[ohn] P[entland]), 1973, 204p. New York: Arkana/Methuen, 1988, 162p.

Written in Russian in 1905 as a "cinema-drama," and first published as *Kinemadrama* (St. Petersburg, 1915), Ouspensky's novel is based on the theme of "eternal recurrence." It tells the story of how the young Ivan Osokin is unable to correct his past mistakes, even when given the chance to relive his life. The last chapter powerfully portrays a man's shock at the realization of his utter mechanicality and characterizes both the promise and the demand of an esoteric school.

- ***In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching***. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949, 399p.; London: Routledge, 1949, 399p. Paperback edition, New York: Harcourt, Brace, no date [196?].

Ouspensky met Gurdjieff in Moscow in 1915. Undertaken in 1925, with Gurdjieff's approval and in progress for many years, parts of the manuscript were read to Ouspensky's groups in the 1930's but it remained unpublished at his death in 1947. It was brought to Gurdjieff's attention by Mme Ouspensky and with his encouragement, published in the Fall of 1949 as a precursor to *Beelzebub's Tales*. This book is the precise, clear result of Ouspensky's long work in recording in an honest and impersonal form these "Fragments of an Unknown Teaching" which he received from Gurdjieff. Remains unparalleled as a lucid and systematic account of

Gurdjieff's early formulation of his ideas.

- ***The Fourth Way: A Record of Talks and Answers to Questions Based on the Teaching of G. I. Gurdjieff.*** Prepared under the general supervision of Sophia Ouspensky. New York: Knopf, 1957, 446p.; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957, 446p., index; New York: Knopf, 1965, 446p., index; New York: Random House, 1971, 446p., index.
- ***Conscience: The Search for Truth.*** Introduction by Merrily E. Taylor. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979, 159p. Contains five texts previously published in limited editions in the 1950s by Stourton Press (Cape Town): *Memory; Surface Personality; Self-Will; Negative Emotions and Notes on Work.*
- ***A Further Record Chiefly of Extracts from Meetings Held by P. D. Ouspensky between 1928 and 1945.*** Privately printed limited edition of 20 copies. Cape Town: Stourton Press, 1952, 347p., index. (Copy in the P. D. Ouspensky Collection, Yale.) Subsequently published as *A Further Record: Extracts from Meetings 1928–1945.* London and New York: Arkana, 1986, 318p., index

These three posthumous collections, *The Fourth Way*, *Conscience* and *A Further Record*, offer selections of Ouspensky's talks and answers to questions, transcribed at private meetings in England and the United States, from 1931 to 1946. These are edited and arranged to elucidate the ideas Ouspensky was transmitting on 'the system.'

- ***Autobiographical Fragment.*** Written in 1935, this brief sketch was first published in the second enlarged edition of his *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution* (1974) Knopf, then in *Remembering Pytor Demianovich Ouspensky* 1978) a brochure compiled and edited by Merrily E. Taylor for Yale University Library. It was subsequently issued as an appendage to *A Further Record: Extracts from Meetings, 1928–1945 Q.V.* (1986) Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Ouspensky sketches his childhood, family, early studies, travel, the development of his philosophy and his relationship with Gurdjieff.

[Pentland, John](#)

- ***Exchanges Within: Questions from Everyday Life Selected from Gurdjieff Group Meetings with John Pentland in California 1955–1984*** (1997) New York: Continuum Publishing Co., ISBN 0-8264-1025-1

A significant contribution "to the small number of genuinely valuable modern works of spiritual direction and guidance. [It] concentrates on one main question: finding within ourselves what we have (this time almost irretrievably) lost: our reality, wholeness and

significance as the human kind of being in the universe." from the foreword by Roy Finch

- ***Speaking of My Life: the art of living in the cultural revolution*** (1979) Edited by Jacob Needleman with a preface by John Pentland. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 149p.

Presentations, questions and answers at the third Far West Institute lecture series held in San Francisco in 1978. Ten speakers examine the role of increasing technology in their personal and professional lives as they struggle with how to live according to conscience in a rapidly changing world. Jacob Needleman and Richard Baker-Roshi, Abbot of the Zen Center in San Francisco, lead the first discussion.

- ***The Search: what are we searching for?*** (1989) A lecture series. Edited by Jacob Needleman and Carol Murphy. San Francisco: Far West Institute, 149p.

The fifth set of lectures sponsored by Far West Institute in San Francisco. These six lectures, delivered in the Spring of 1982, featured a publisher, a painter, an Indian medicine woman, a poet and storyteller, a Cistercian monk, a drama and voice teacher and Jacob Needleman, professor of philosophy. Each speaker offers a candid examination of the search for meaning in their private and their professional lives, then fields questions at a colloquium the next day. John Pentland is a frequent participant in five of the discussions.

- ***The Exacting Ear: the story of listener sponsored radio and an anthology of programs from KPFA, KPFK and WBAI*** (1966) Edited by Eleanor McKinney, Preface by Erich Fromm, New York: Random House, 339p.

This anthology of programs from the early days of public sponsored radio includes the transcript of a very informed roundtable discussion about Gurdjieff's then recently published *Meetings with Remarkable Men*. Participants are John Pentland, Roy Finch and Larry (L.S.) Morris, all senior Gurdjieff students. Pentland points out that what is quite original about the book is that it presents "the complete organic picture of a man's possible growth, particularly man's emotional growth. A new way of living for the sake of understanding life."

- ***Transmission: an interview with Lord Pentland*** (1996) Conducted by Dick Anthony and Bruce Ekker in *Gurdjieff: essays and reflections*, edited by Jacob Needleman and George Baker. New York: Continuum, pp. 382–393.

John Pentland speaks candidly about how he worked with Ouspensky and Gurdjieff, as well as his role in the transmission of Gurdjieff's teaching in America and the challenge of establishing stable groups of people with commitment, organizational intelligence and an intense seriousness about their inner search.

- ***Ouspensky, P.D. In The Encyclopedia of Religion*** (1987) 16 Volumes, Edited by Mircea

Eliade and others, New York: Macmillan, Volume 11, pp. 143–4.

John Pentland was uniquely qualified to write about his longtime teacher. He offers an informed, original synopsis of Ouspensky's important contributions as an independent thinker, writer and leading disseminator of Gurdjieff's teaching.

Peters, Fritz

- *Boyhood with Gurdjieff* (1964) New York: E.P. Dutton & Co.

"This is a highly delectable book, and by delectable I do not mean a book to be taken lightly. Indeed, a more appropriate adjective to describe it would be *glorious*. Not only is it full of amazing anecdotes, it is also full of wisdom. The wisdom of life." —from the cover by Henry Miller

Rawlinson, Andrew

- *Enlightened Masters: Western Teachers in Eastern Teachings* (1997) Open Court, 650 pages

An encyclopedic guide to Eastern influenced psycho-spiritual traditions and trends. It provides an informed thirty-page synopsis of major leaders in Gurdjieff's legacy.

Staveley, A. L.

- *Memories of Gurdjieff* (1978) Aurora, Oregon: [Two Rivers Press](#), ISBN 0-89756-000-0

Warm vignettes of Mrs. Staveley's visits to Gurdjieff in Paris from 1948–1949, following her apprenticeship with Jane Heap in London.

- *Themes I* (1981) Aurora, Oregon: Two Rivers Press
- *Themes II* (1982) Aurora, Oregon: Two Rivers Press
- *Themes III* (198?) Aurora, Oregon: Two Rivers Press

Themes for inner work developed by A. L. Staveley and her pupils at Two Rivers Farm in Aurora, Oregon.

Tracol, Henri

- *The Taste For Things That Are True: Essays & Talks by a Pupil of G. I. Gurdjieff* (1994) Longmead, Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element Books Limited, ISBN 1-85230-468-5

"This collection of illuminating essays, articles and interviews is essential reading for all who seek to lead a more spiritual and purposeful life... They offer an accessible introduction to Gurdjieff's thought, and bring valuable new insights into the life and personality of this enigmatic and increasingly influential figure." —from the Cover

Vaysse, Jean

- *Toward Awakening: An Approach to the Teaching Left by Gurdjieff* (1979) San Francisco: Harper & Row, ISBN 1-85063-115-8

"For the growing number of people seeking to approach the ideas of Gurdjieff, *Toward Awakening* by Jean Vaysse offers reliable guidance, as well as evidence of the continuing vitality of this remarkable teaching. It may be counted as among the small handful of books that communicate something of what Gurdjieff brought." —Jacob Needleman

Waldberg, Michel

- *Gurdjieff: An Approach to His Ideas* (1981) London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

Based on a lecture given in 1966 at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris, this book presents an accurate and sympathetic introduction to Gurdjieff's ideas and teaching.

Walker, Kenneth

- *A Study of Gurdjieff's Teaching* (1957) London: Jonathan Cape, SBN 224 60912 2

"He expounds in outline the ideas themselves. He does it very well, quietly and unassumingly, not setting out the 'system' in abstract terms but realizing how he gradually came to know it and how it influenced him." —a review from the Observer

- *Venture with Ideas* (1951) London: Janathan Cape (1952) New York: Pellegrini & Cudahy

Written to show the impact of Gurdjieff's system "on a man who had received an orthodox scientific education." This book is an autobiographical account of Walker's long association with Ouspensky's groups and Walker's brief encounters with Gurdjieff.

Welch, Louise

- *Orage with Gurdjieff in America* (1982) Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982, 142p.

Louise Welch studied with A. R. Orage during his eight years in New York. She went on to become a senior leader in the study of Gurdjieff's teaching. Welch provides a vividly personal account of Orage's background and his continuing influence as a writer and editor as well as his pivotal role as Gurdjieff's representative in America.

Welch, William

- *What Happened in Between: A Doctor's Story*. New York: Braziller, 1972, 208p., ISBN 8076-0660-X (hc).

Welch compactly describes his life both as a physician and as a student of Gurdjieff. Provides a sardonic account of “The Fruits of Bureaucracy” in describing American political expediency and the resulting dehumanization of medical practice and treatment. Welch came into contact with Gurdjieff's ideas through C. Daly King in 1934 and gives a vivid account of Gurdjieff's visits to New York in the late 1940s. He attended Gurdjieff at his death—“the death of a man ‘not in quotation marks.’ And I have seen many men die.” Dr. Welch succeeded John Pentland as President of the New York Gurdjieff Foundation from 1984 until his own death in 1997.

Zuber, René

- *Who Are You Monsieur Gurdjieff?* (1980) London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

The account of a French pupil who met Gurdjieff in Paris during the German occupation of World War II.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

The Gurdjieff Foundation

Institut Gurdjieff — The Gurdjieff Society

The Gurdjieff Foundation, the largest organization directly linked to Mr. Gurdjieff, was organized by [Jeanne de Salzmann](#) during the early 1950s and led by her, in cooperation with other direct pupils, until her death in 1990. From that year until his recent passing in August 2001, [Dr. Michel de Salzmann](#) directed the network of Gurdjieff foundations, societies, and institutes. The work of the Foundation continues today with the guidance of direct pupils and the next generation. The Foundation is registered under the name “The Gurdjieff Foundation” in the USA, by the name “The Gurdjieff Society” in the UK, and in France under the name “Institut Gurdjieff.” These organizations have kindly provided us with the following contact information:

Gurdjieff Foundation of New York

Since its creation in 1953, the Gurdjieff Foundation of New York has been dedicated to preserving the essence, specificity and integrity of the teaching of G. I. Gurdjieff in North America. Because the Internet is now a dominant resource for many seeking information, the Foundation has provided the following telephone number for those who wish to establish contact: 212-838-7727. This is a dedicated line intended exclusively for initial inquiries. The Foundation will be grateful if its purpose is respected.

Gurdjieff Society of London

The Gurdjieff Society can be contacted by writing: The Gurdjieff Society, BM 4752, London WC1N 3XX, United Kingdom.

Gurdjieff Foundation of Ohio

The Gurdjieff Foundation of Ohio was founded in 1961 by the members of the Gurdjieff Foundation of New York and since that time has remained closely linked. It is centered in Cleveland and draws members from all of Ohio and Southeast Michigan. Interested persons can call: 440-256-5709.

Gurdjieff Foundation of Austin and San Antonio, Texas

The Gurdjieff Foundation of Austin and San Antonio is affiliated with The Gurdjieff Foundation of New York.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Dr. Michel de Salzmänn

1923–2001

[M. Michel de Salzmänn](#)

Members of the worldwide Gurdjieff community grieve the loss of Dr. Michel de Salzmänn on August 4, 2001.

[G. I. Gurdjieff by Michel de Salzmänn](#)

Dr. de Salzmänn provides an informed and thoughtful synopsis of Gurdjieff’s life, writings and influence as “an incomparable ‘awakener’ of men” and spiritual teacher who “left behind him a school embodying a specific methodology for the development of consciousness... The Gurdjieff teaching has emerged ... as one of the most penetrating spiritual teachings of modern times.”

[The Gurdjieff Foundation](#)

The Gurdjieff Foundation, the largest organization directly linked to Mr. Gurdjieff, was organized by Jeanne de Salzmänn during the early 1950s and led by her, in cooperation with other direct pupils, until her death in 1990. From that year until his recent passing in August 2001, Michel de Salzmänn directed the network of Gurdjieff foundations, societies, and institutes.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

M. Michel de Salzmann

December 31, 1923 – August 4, 2001

Le Figaro, Paris, Monday, August 6, 2001: Daily record.

It is with sorrow that Alexandre and Danielle de Salzmann—their children, Nathalie, Marine (his grand-children), Mrs. Nathalie Etievan de Salzmann, her children, grand-children and great grand-children (his sister, his nephews and nieces), Mrs. Jean Person, her children and grand-children, Mr. and Mrs. Yves Person, their children and grand-children, (his brother-in-law and sisters-in-law, his nephews and nieces), Mr. and Mrs. Jules Allemand, their children and grand-children—announce the death of [M. Michel de Salzmann](#) at Beaupréau on August 4, 2001, in his 78th year.

Church services will be on Tuesday, August 7, at 10:30 AM in the church of Saint Pierre de Chaillot in Paris (16^e). Burial is on Wednesday, August 8, 2001 at the cemetery of Rois, at Plainpalais in Geneva.

~ • ~

Le Monde, Paris, Wednesday, August 8, 2001: Daily Notes.

Michel de Salzmann left this world on August 4, 2001. He remains present in our hearts. His friends salute him as one of the most important spiritual figures of our century.

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Gurdjieff

International
Review

- Home
- Editor's Note
- Latest Issue
- ▶ Past Issues
- ▶ His Writings
- His Pupils
- Movements
- The Music
- Group Work
- ▶ Books
- About this Site
- Contact Us
- Online Store

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Gurdjieff

International Review

April 2000 Issue, Vol. III No. 2

In Memoriam: Some Pupils of Gurdjieff

[Editorial Introduction](#)

Our tenth issue continues our memorial focus on Gurdjieff in recognition of the 50th year since his death in Paris on October 29, 1949. In this issue, we draw upon accounts of some of Gurdjieff's first generation pupils. All back issues are available in their entirety as [printed copies](#).

[Jane Heap](#) [As Remembered by Some of](#) [Those She Taught](#)

[Sample Only]

A. L. Staveley recalls vivid impressions of her work with Jane Heap in London during World War II which prepared her to meet Gurdjieff in 1946. This sketch was first published in *Jane Heap 1887–1964: As remembered by some of those she taught* by Two Rivers Press, 1988 in a limited edition and is reproduced here with their kind permission.

[Threads of Time](#) [Recollections of Jeanne de](#) [Salzmann](#)

In this excerpt from his autobiography, *Threads of Time*, Peter Brook—who had attended Jane Heap's group for more than a decade—offers a succinct and vivid cameo of Jeanne de



Pencil sketch of Gurdjieff by Ziga Valishevsky, circa 1919

The greater the height to which Beelzebub goes, the more the confusion of our usual jumble of ideas is dispelled. What emerges is the opposite—we see in high relief what was previously screened and misunderstood. The high has illuminated the low. Infinite spaces have ceased to frighten us.

Manuel Rainoidr

I can too easily assume that this "I AM" of Gurdjieff's (or of the Bible) is all about me and my personal development. It may take years of inner work to come to the realization that this self-centered attitude of mine is the greatest barrier between me and the impersonal highest in me, which he calls "I."

James George

Madame de Salzmann would always rise graciously to

Salzmann who was close to Gurdjieff for thirty years.

William & Louise Welch

Patty Welch Llosa provides a candid glimpse of her parents as well as an account of their roles as leaders of Gurdjieff groups.

For Dr. William J. Welch

Roger Lipsey's eulogy of Dr. Welch is deeply felt and conveys a life vibrantly lived. It was delivered during Dr. Welch's funeral at St. Thomas church in New York City on July 12, 1997 and here includes biographical details that were unnecessary on that occasion.

A Remembrance of W. A. Nyland In the Ear and Eye of the Beholder

Terry Winter Owens, former student of Willem Nyland, notes that "With the passage of half a century since the death of Gurdjieff, it becomes increasingly obvious that there now flourish a number of different threads of the Gurdjieff work... As yet, little has been written about W. A. Nyland although he had a profound impact on many people."

Louise March

Louise March was Gurdjieff's only follower fluent in German, and the translation of *Beelzebub's Tales* into that language fell largely to her. In the late 1950s, she established a community in upper state New York named the Rochester Folk Art Guild. A group of her pupils offer a brief account of her life followed by selections of her writing and sayings.

Pamela Travers

welcome a visitor. She would sit upright, still and contained, and would respond with laughter or seriousness, finding precisely the words and the idiom that corresponded to the age and understanding of the listener.

Peter Brook

Jane [Heap] seldom if ever said, "Go here—go there. Do this—do that." Her method of transmitting the teaching was to create learning situations, and from these you learned. Or did not learn, as the case might be.

Annie Lou Staveley

It's a question of emphasis. You put emphasis on its [negative emotion] strength, when it should more practically be on your weakness. And that relates to your understanding. All negative emotion has its momentum, but if you are there, it stops.

George Adie

The first step is to 'learn to listen,' to wish to listen, to wish to drop the chaos in oneself in the same way that we drop the body at physical death. This step means that we won't interfere any longer, will not change anything (in the beginning not even ourselves); that we will not quarrel, that we have no opinion to insist upon; that we will not translate what we hear into our automatic daily language—which would be equal to letting it go out the other ear.

Louise March

The Gurdjieff Society of London offers an account of Pamela Travers—the creator of Mary Poppins—and points out how “her special skill in connecting or linking the pearls of spiritual tradition ... was undoubtedly her greatest and perhaps her unique contribution.”

[George Mountford Adie](#)

Joseph Azize—a long-time student of George Adie—describes Mr. Adie’s practice of Gurdjieff’s teaching and his singular contribution to establishing the Work in Australia; in so doing, he offers valuable observations on the pupil-teacher relationship.

[Dr. John Lester](#)

David Kangas, a member of Two Rivers Farm, observes how the “fall of 1999 saw the passing of Dr. John R. Lester, and with his death we count one fewer who actually saw Gurdjieff with his own eyes, heard his voice with his own ears, sat at Gurdjieff’s table.”

[Combining Good and Truth, Now An Homage to Maurice Nicoll](#)

The author, Bob Hunter, was a student of Beryl Pogson—Maurice Nicoll’s secretary and biographer. He emphasizes that Nicoll’s “special contribution to the Fourth Way is that his teaching, by leavening the method transmitted by P. D. Ouspensky, helps people to value the Work [and] showed how to see the good of it.”

Other New Features

[Gurdjieff Heralds the Awakening of Consciousness Now](#)

James George writes for this issue taking a

I have chosen to focus on what I remember and believe Mr. Nyland himself considered important: his unrelenting imperative to work on oneself and to do so correctly and in accordance with an accurate representation of inner effort and its relationship to the ideas as a whole.

Terry Winter Owens

He turned his full attention towards me, which, I can tell you, was considerable, and said “Is more important that you say I am, than is that you breathe.”

John Lester

The hours of sleep were short; the hours of labor long. Gurdjieff constantly pushed his pupils past their states of “imaginary fatigue,” and on through their “second wind” to real fatigue.

Gorham Munson

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April 1, 2000

bird's eye view of the influence of Gurdjieff's teaching over the past eighty years and noting that "now the spreading is amplified by the electronic revolution of the Internet, for worse or for better. The spiritualization of the global village has begun. Suddenly, there are rays to the sun everywhere. One of these rays—the one that has meant the most to me—is the 'Work' or teaching of Gurdjieff."

Beelzebub, a Master Stroke **Belzébuth, un coup de maître**

[Sample Only]

In this penetrating examination of *Beelzebub's Tales*, Rainoird emphasizes that Gurdjieff's master work "cannot be read as we commonly read our books—and which simultaneously attracts and repels us." Rainoird's commentary was first published as *Belzébuth, un coup de maître* in *Monde Nouveau* (Paris) October, 1956 as a review of the publication of the first French edition. This translation is the first to offer the complete text in English.

Copyright Conventions in an Unconventional World: A Note about the Writings of Gurdjieff and his Circle

Roger Lipsey, former editorial manager for Triangle Editions who hold copyright on Gurdjieff's writings, examines the question of legitimate and illegitimate publication of Gurdjieff's works.

Brother in Elysium: Orage in Gurdjieff's Service

[Sample Only]

Michael Benham reviews Paul Beekman Taylor's *Brother in Elysium: Orage in Gurdjieff's Service* forthcoming Samuel Weiser, Winter 2000/2001. Drawing on a wealth of unpublished Orage family archives, Taylor assembles the most comprehensive

Orage biography to date. He vividly reconstructs the 1922–1933 period to demonstrate that A. R. Orage’s involvement with Gurdjieff was the natural evolution of his own search and not an aberration as presumed by Orage’s literary biographers.

**The Strange Cult of Gurdjieff:
an Insider’s Story of the Most
Mysterious Religious
Movement in the World**

[Sample Only]

First published in *Practical Psychology Monthly* around 1937. Although Gorham Munson propagates the false rumor that Gurdjieff was the Tibetan Lama Dorzhieff, his flamboyantly titled article presents the richest and most detailed account of the enigma of Gurdjieff available up to 1937. With more than ten years as a student of Orage’s and occasional meetings with Gurdjieff, including a summer spent with him in France, Munson, writing under the pseudonym “Armagnac,” describes Gurdjieff’s school at the Prieuré and the teaching presented there.

**Around the Theatre
The Voice of Moscow**

[Sample Only]

On the first few pages of *In Search of the Miraculous*, P. D. Ouspensky describes his return to Russia in November of 1914 and how, working as a journalist, he came across this notice and put it in his newspaper that winter, shortly before his first meeting with Gurdjieff.



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Editorial Introduction

Some Pupils of Gurdjieff

Thanks to the encouragement, support and contributions of readers, twelve of the sixteen pieces herein were written or translated specifically for this issue. We are grateful to Victor Kholodkov in San Diego who brought Ziga Valishevsky's 1919 pencil sketch of Gurdjieff to our attention, and who also sent us a Russian copy of the 1914 "Around the Theatre" notice of Gurdjieff's ballet *Struggle of the Magicians* from *The Voice of Moscow*. We regret that page limitations in our printed issue do not allow us to include six additional articles we prepared, but readers can look forward to them in future issues.

This issue is dedicated to the speedy recovery of Michael Smyth of Abintra Books whose recent illness prevented him from completing a sketch of A. L. Staveley for this issue.

J. Walter Driscoll
Greg Loy

Notable New Releases

Gurdjieff / de Hartmann Music for the Piano Volume III: Hymns, Prayers and Rituals. Three CDs performed by Charles Ketcham and Laurence Rosenthal, Wergo LC 00846. "We find in *Hymns, Prayers and Rituals* undoubtedly the most profound reflection of Gurdjieff the Master. Although quite varied in form and somewhat in style, these pieces all share the unmistakable mark of the depth of his inner feeling and sensitivity ... the hymns ... do not correspond to the conventional notion of music sung by church congregations or choirs. They might instead be viewed as expressions of inner states in which man confronts his inmost self." (From the album notes by Eugene E. Foster.)

Gurdjieff's Music for the Movements composed in collaboration with Thomas de Hartmann. Wim van Dullemen, piano. Herwijnen, Holland: Channel Crossings, CCS 15298, (www.channelclassics.com), two CDs contain 46 pieces including some fragments and pieces of unknown origin.

Gurdjieff / de Hartmann [Music] Hidden Sources. Alessandra Celletti, piano, Rome: KHA, 1999, (www.kha.it). One CD with 18 selections that provide a representative sampling of Gurdjieff's music.

A Lively Oracle: a Centennial Celebration of P. L. Travers, Creator of Mary Poppins. Ellen Dooling Draper and Jenny Koralek, editors. New York: Larson Publications, 1999, 224p., index. Sixteen eloquent, informed and deeply appreciative tributes, not only about Travers' beloved Mary Poppins novels but also for her enduring contributions as a storyteller and myth-spinner. Includes three major articles by Travers. Her article, "The Fairy Tale as Teacher" evokes the awakening effect of fairy tales and examines *Beelzebub's Tales* as an exceptional example of their power. "Here is a fairy tale for our time, a piece of objective writing that we cannot read without in some sense experiencing it."

Heart Without Measure: Work with Madame de Salzmänn. Halifax: Shaila Press, 1999, 218p., (www.shailapress.com). Drawing on his private journals, Professor Ravi Ravindra sketches an admiring and grateful portrait of Jeanne de Salzmänn through the decade he studied with her as his teacher and international leader of the Gurdjieff Foundation.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

René Daumal

1908–1944

One of the most gifted literary figures in France in the early part of the twentieth century, René Daumal was a genuine seeker of truth. In the later part of his life, he had the good fortune to meet and work with Gurdjieff.

[The Holy War](#)

René Daumal's prose-poem that heralds a fiery call to inner warfare is translated by D. M. Dooling from "La Guerre Sainte," in Daumal's collection, *Poésie Noire, Poésie Blanche*.

[The Strait Gate](#)

First published in *Poésie 99* (78) Paris, June 1999, this essay by Basarab Nicolescu is translated from the French "La Porte Étroite" by Martha Heyneman for its first English publication here. Nicolescu points out that "It is high time to undertake a serious inquiry into the relation between Daumal's own work and the influence Gurdjieff's teaching had upon him," and calls for the undertaking of such "a detailed study conducted in conformity with all the rules of scholarship." We propose Kathleen Rosenblatt's recent *René Daumal: The Life of a Mystic Guide* as a candidate for this position.

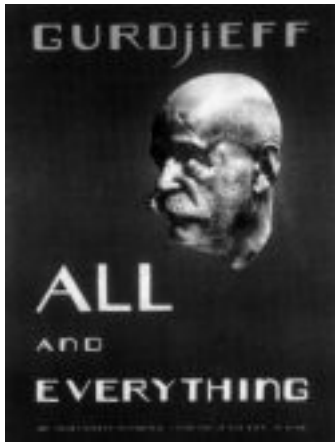
[Daumal with Gurdjieff and the de Salzmanns](#)

The first part of Chapter 9 from Kathleen Rosenblatt's recent book *René Daumal: The Life and Work of a Mystic Guide*, (1999) New York: SUNY Press, is reproduced by permission of the State University of New York Press and the author.

[The Role of Movement...](#)

Daumal invites the reader to participate in a movements class lead by Jeanne de Salzmann in the 1930s.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson

An Objectively Impartial Criticism of the Life of Man

Table of Contents

1. [The arousing of thought](#)
2. [Introduction: Why Beelzebub was in our solar system](#)
3. [The cause of the delay in the falling of the ship Karnak](#)
4. [The law of falling](#)
5. [The system of Archangel Hariton](#)
6. [Perpetual motion](#)
7. [Becoming aware of genuine being-duty](#)
8. [The impudent brat Hassein, Beelzebub's grandson, dares to call men "slugs"](#)
9. [The cause of the genesis of the Moon](#)
10. [Why "men" are not men](#)
11. A piquant trait of the peculiar psyche of contemporary man
12. The first "growl"
13. Why in man's reason fantasy may be perceived as reality
14. The beginnings of perspectives promising nothing very cheerful
15. The first descent of Beelzebub upon the planet Earth
16. The relative understanding of Time
17. The Arch-absurd: According to the assertion of Beelzebub, our Sun neither lights or heats
18. The Arch-preposterous
19. Beelzebub's tales about his second descent on to the planet Earth
20. The third flight of Beelzebub to the planet Earth
21. The first visit of Beelzebub to India
22. Beelzebub for the first time in Tibet
23. The fourth personal sojourn of Beelzebub on the planet Earth
24. Beelzebub's flight to the planet Earth for the fifth time

25. The Very Saintly Ashiata Shiemash, sent from Above to the Earth
26. The Legominism concerning the deliberations of the Very Saintly Ashiata Shiemash under the title of "The Terror of the Situation"
27. The organization for man's existence created by the Very Saintly Ashiata Shiemash
28. The chief culprit in the destruction of all the Very Saintly Labors of Ashiata Shiemash
29. The fruits of former civilizations and the blossoms of the contemporary
30. Art
31. The sixth and last sojourn of Beelzebub on the planet Earth
32. Hypnotism
33. Beelzebub as professional hypnotist
34. Russia
35. A change in the appointed course of the falling of the transspace ship Karnak
36. Just a wee bit more about the Germans
37. France
38. Religion
39. The Holy Planet "Purgatory"
40. Beelzebub tells how people learned and again forgot about the fundamental cosmic law of Heptaparaparshinokh
41. The Bokharian dervish Hadji-Asvatz-Troov
42. Beelzebub in America
43. Beelzebub's survey of the process of the periodic reciprocal destruction of men, or Beelzebub's opinion of war
44. In the opinion of Beelzebub, man's understanding of justice is for him in the objective sense an accursed mirage
45. In the opinion of Beelzebub, man's extraction of electricity from Nature and its destruction during its use, is one of the chief causes of the shortening of the life of man
46. Beelzebub explains to his grandson the significance of the form and sequence which he chose for expounding the information concerning man
47. The inevitable result of impartial mentation
48. From the author

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Louise Welch

1905–1999

In the late 1920s, Louise Welch studied with A. R. Orage during his eight years in New York. Later she visited Gurdjieff's Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man in Fontainebleau where she met Gurdjieff. Later, when the Ouspenskys came to the US in 1941, she worked with them in New York and Mendham, NJ. After the deaths of both Ouspensky and Gurdjieff, she was among those assembled by Jeanne de Salzman to become a trustee of the Gurdjieff Foundation. She was married to [Dr. William Welch](#), also a pupil of Gurdjieff and the doctor who attended him during his last illness. Mrs. Welch was also editor-in-chief of the *Guide and Index to Gurdjieff's Beelzebub's Tales*.

[William & Louise Welch](#)

Patty Welch Llosa provides a candid glimpse of her parents as well as an account of their roles as leaders of Gurdjieff groups.

[Louise Welch — Essence Friend](#)

David Young met Mrs. Welch in 1960 and studied with her until she died forty years later. In preparing this article, he drew on videotapes and an archive of unpublished notes as well as his many meetings with her. "It is clear now that we understood only part of what she said then. We were helped, and felt grateful, but we took in only what our little cups could hold—and they were filled to overflowing. But it was often only much later, when we had more experience, that we could understand what she was giving us. I am still learning from her."

[Louise Welch: A Poem by Martha Heyneman](#)

Martha Heyneman worked with Louise Welch for several decades. Her poem provides a heartfelt eulogy and fitting conclusion to David Young's tribute.

[A. R. Orage: An Introduction by Louise Welch](#)

Louise Welch, author of *Orage with Gurdjieff in America* (1982) was in Orage's New York Gurdjieff group and was uniquely qualified to write about him. This thoughtful introduction was written for the compilation, *On Love and three essays from the Notebook of A. R. Orage*, which she edited. It was privately published in a limited edition of 200 copies in 1969 by the Society for Traditional Studies (Toronto) and is reproduced with the kind permission of the publisher Bob McWhinney.

Gurdjieff Movements Demonstration

Gurdjieff arrives in New York City in February 1924 and presents a movements demonstration at the Neighborhood Playhouse.

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Photo of Louise Welch © 1985 Martha Henrickson
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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Thomas de Hartmann

1886–1956

Thomas de Hartmann was born in the Ukraine and was already an acclaimed composer in Russia when he first met Gurdjieff. He spent the years 1917–1929 as a pupil and confidant of Gurdjieff where at the Prieuré, he collaborated with Gurdjieff to compose the musical work that continues to inspire to this day. He later was one of the founding members of the [Gurdjieff Foundation](#) of New York.

[On Thomas de Hartmann](#)

This biographical sketch by Thomas C. Daly and Thomas A. G. Daly was originally published in *Our Life with Mr Gurdjieff: Definitive Edition*, London: Penguin Arkana, 1992, 277p.

[Music: Our Life with Mr Gurdjieff](#)

Written by Thomas and [Olga de Hartmann](#), this account of the musical collaboration between Gurdjieff and Thomas de Hartmann was first published as Chapter 25 of *Our Life with Mr Gurdjieff: Definitive Edition*.

[Music Manuscript Sample Page](#)

This first page of *Holy Affirming, Holy Denying, Holy Reconciling* is taken from de Hartmann's music manuscripts. It is also partially reproduced in the Triangle Editions record album and CD notes. Besides showing de Hartmann's elegant music calligraphy, it contains his English handwriting, and connects to expressions used in *Beelzebub's Tales*.

[A Talk by Mr. de Hartmann: Attention—Wish—Will—Free Will](#)

Tom Daly read Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous* on its publication in 1949, then had the good fortune to meet and befriend the de Hartmanns while they were living near Montreal in 1951.

First published here, he describes the setting and impact of Thomas de Hartmann's 1954 talk to the then fledgling Toronto group.

[On Listening to the Gurdjieff / de Hartmann Music](#)

This anonymous commentary was written for the *Gurdjieff International Review* by a senior member of the Gurdjieff Society in London. For the author "it became apparent that for music to say what it had to say depended as much on the listening as what was listened to."

[The Sound of Gurdjieff](#)

This essay by Laurence Rosenthal was originally published in Parabola Magazine, Volume XI (3) 1985, as a review of the four-record album brought out by Triangle Editions in 1985. Reprinted with kind permission of Parabola and the author.

[Discography](#)

An inventory of recorded Gurdjieff / de Hartmann music is summarized.

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[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Jane Heap

1887–1964

Even before she met Gurdjieff, who was to become her mentor and lifelong inspiration, Jane Heap was already a legendary thinker and raconteur in her own right. In 1916 she became co-editor of the legendary literary journal, *The Little Review*. Jane Heap first heard about Gurdjieff through A. R. Orage. After meeting Gurdjieff himself during his 1924 visit to New York, Heap started a Gurdjieff study group in her Greenwich Village apartment and later departed for Paris where she studied with Gurdjieff until his death in 1949.

[Jane Heap \(1887–1964\)](#)

A bio-sketch and selection of Heap's aphorisms by Rob Baker published here first. Outlines Heaps' life-long literary influence and forty years devoted to presenting Gurdjieff's teaching to groups in London & Paris from 1924; then at Gurdjieff's wish, in London from 1935 until her death.

[No Harem: Gurdjieff and the Women of The Rope](#)

Rob Baker sketches a group of strong-willed women, mostly writers who also happened to be lesbians, that Gurdjieff worked with from 1936—including Solita Solano, Kathryn Hulme, Margaret Anderson, Jane Heap, and Georgette Leblanc. First published here, Baker draws on the extensive research he is conducting for a forthcoming book on *The Rope*.

[Jane Heap: As Remembered by Some of Those She Taught](#)

A. L. Staveley recalls vivid impressions of her work with Jane Heap in London during World War II which prepared her to meet Gurdjieff in 1946. This sketch was first published in *Jane Heap 1887–1964: As remembered by some of those she taught* by Two Rivers Press, 1988 in a limited edition and is reproduced here with their kind permission.

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Two Rivers Press

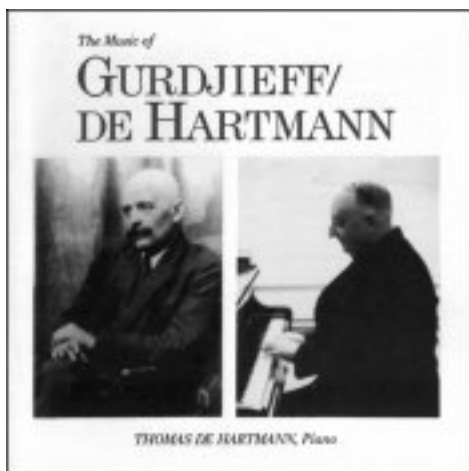
Book List - January 2002

<i>Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson</i>	G. I. Gurdjieff	\$ 45.00
<i>The Notes of Jane Heap</i>	J. Heap	\$ 20.00
<i>Notes</i> (Out of Print)	J. Heap	N/A
<i>Themes I</i>	A. L. Staveley	\$ 20.00
<i>Themes II</i>	A. L. Staveley	\$ 20.00
<i>Themes III</i>	A. L. Staveley	\$ 20.00
<i>Aim & Wish</i> (pamphlet)	A. L. Staveley	\$ 5.00
<i>Memories of Gurdjieff</i>	A. L. Staveley	\$ 13.00
<i>Where is Bernardino?</i>	A. L. Staveley	\$ 8.95
<i>Diary of Madame Egout Pour Sweet</i>	Rina Hands	\$ 11.95
<i>The Pearl</i>	Hogrogian	\$ 7.95
<i>A Diagnosis for Man</i> (Out of Print)	Green	N/A
<i>Threads of Light</i> (poetry)	D. Kherdian	\$ 10.00
<i>The Farm</i> (poetry)	D. Kherdian	\$ 6.95
<i>The Farm II</i> (poetry)	D. Kherdian	\$ 7.95

Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson is the original translation.
All books are hardbound, except for *A Diagnosis for Man*.

Mail orders only, send to:

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28070 S. Meridian Road
Aurora, OR 97002



[Gurdjieff International Review](#)

Gurdjieff / de Hartmann Music Discography

[The Music of Gurdjieff / de Hartmann: the Triangle Editions Recordings](#)

Three selections of piano music from the Triangle Editions Recordings, chosen with commentary by Tom Daly, are performed by Thomas de Hartmann and reproduced in audio (MP3) format. In addition to carrying the authority of being the composer's recordings, these evocative performances from the 1950's are unsurpassed in their own right.

[Gurdjieff / de Hartmann Music for the Piano: Wergo / Schott Recordings](#)

Eugene E. Foster provides an appreciative introduction to the first two of a four volume series of compact discs and printed music being issued by Wergo / Schott Music in Mainz, Germany. When completed, it will form the most comprehensive set of recordings and sheet music available of the Gurdjieff / de Hartmann music. Piano performances are by Linda Daniel-Spitz, Charles Ketcham and Laurence Rosenthal.

Improvisations: G. I. Gurdjieff on the harmonium

Two records (CAT 010-011), Editions Janus, Paris, France (privately circulated and no longer available).

Anthology of the Gurdjieff / de Hartmann Music: Alain Kremski, piano

Six compact discs, sold separately in four volumes, two of which contain two disks. Editions Audivis-Valois, Paris, 1990.

Bridge to the Unseen: Melanie Monsur, Piano

The compositions are believed to be reconstructions of melodies that Gurdjieff remembered from his homeland or heard on his travels to monasteries in Central Asia. A single disc representative compilation of sensitively preformed pieces.

Music Composed in Collaboration: Herbert Henck, piano

G. I. Gurdjieff / Thomas de Hartmann, set of two compact discs. Wergo Schallplatten, Mainz, Germany.

Sacred Hymns of Gurdjieff: Keith Jarrett, Piano

Reading Of Sacred Books / Prayer And Despair / Religious Ceremony / Hymn / Orthodox Hymn From Asia Minor / Hymn For Good Friday / Hymn / Hymn For Easter Thursday / Hymn To The Endless Creator / Hymn From A Great Temple / The Story Of The Resurrection Of Christ / Holy Affirming-Holy Denying-Holy Reconciling / Easter Night Procession / Easter Hymn / Meditation.

The Sacred Music of G. I. Gurdjieff: Carolyn Margrete, Piano

Carolyn Margrete is a pianist, composer and teacher who has been associated with the performance and study of the music of Gurdjieff for more than 20 years. For this recording she has chosen pieces which she particularly relates to and feels express the unusual qualities of this sacred music.

The Complete Piano Music of Gurdjieff and de Hartmann: Cecil Lytle, Piano

Three double disk compilations. SEEKERS OF THE TRUTH presents the reflective, ceremonial music of Gurdjieff / de Hartmann's majestic suites. READING OF A SACRED BOOK contains some of their dance and character pieces of a more lively nature. WORDS FOR A HYMN TO THE SUN completes the trilogy with Songs and Rhythms of Asia and a disk of Movements music. Cecil Lytle is professor and chairman of the Department of Music, University of California, San Diego.

Meetings with Remarkable Men: Gurdjieff's Search for Hidden Knowledge, Citadel Records.

Original Motion Picture Soundtrack by Thomas de Hartmann and Laurence Rosenthal. Rosenthal conducts the National Philharmonic Orchestra. This digitally remastered CD features all the original tracks from the 1979 LP and additional cues of melodic and powerful music by Russian composer Thomas de Hartmann and Laurence Rosenthal. The National Philharmonic Orchestra is augmented with exotic instruments and choral performance by the Ambrosian Singers. Winner Best Film Score, Oxford Film Festival.

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Dr. William J. Welch

1911–1997

Dr. William Welch attended Gurdjieff at his death and was President of the Gurdjieff Foundation in New York, succeeding John Pentland.

[William & Louise Welch](#)

Patty Welch Llosa provides a candid glimpse of her parents as well as an account of their roles as leaders of Gurdjieff groups.

[For Dr. William J. Welch](#)

Roger Lipsey's eulogy of Dr. Welch is deeply felt and conveys a life vibrantly lived. It was delivered during Dr. Welch's funeral at St. Thomas church in New York City on July 12, 1997 and here includes biographical details that were unnecessary on that occasion.

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