

INNER WORK EXERCISES I

Exercises for self-development were always an integral component of inner work during each phase of Gurdjieff's teaching endeavor in the West. In Russia there were both individual and group tasks revolving around self-observation and self-remembering to foster self-knowledge and guide efforts in working with mechanical thought patterns and negative emotions. In 1918 in Essentuki, Gurdjieff broadened the spectrum of exercises and work tasks which were much more varied and difficult than those previously pre-scribed. They included housework, gymnastics, dervish dances, rhythmic exercises to music, a variety of mental exercises, breathing exercises and even the study of imitation paranormal phenomena such as clairvoyance, thought reading and mediumship. (1)

Later, at the Prieuré in France in the 1920s, there were special exercises for the development of will, attention, memory, thinking and perception. At this time, the Movements and sacred dances also became a pivotal aspect of the curriculum of his Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man. During the 1930s, Gurdjieff initiated readings from the manuscripts *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* and *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, as well as introducing new inner work exercises for his group "the Rope." The 1940s saw the development of new Movements and numerous individual and group exercises.

Although Gurdjieff never divulged the sources of his inner exercises, his writings and conversations with students provide a few clues as to their origins. Some of the exercises may be derived from neo-platonic sources and Eastern teachings such as Sufism and Tibetan Buddhism. In his recent scholarly volume *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises*, Joseph Azize argues that many of Gurdjieff's "internal exercises" were adapted from the hesychast Christian Orthodox tradition, specifically from the spiritual techniques associated with the monastery of Mount Athos in Greece, such as "the Prayer of the Heart."

In his teaching, Gurdjieff assigned tasks and exercises to both individual students and groups based on the needs and 'chief feature' of each pupil and the nature and composition of a group. Spiritual exercises are technical instruments which are designed to develop self-knowledge and inner growth. They need to be tailored to account for individual differences and cultural and temporal conditions ('time, place and people'). Student Jean Vaysse succinctly summarizes some of the conditions necessary for the implementation and successful application of exercises intended to provide a framework or structure for inner development:

Everything is relative, since human beings do not all possess the same possibilities for evolution; but all of us have a way we can follow, and which for us is essential. This way goes through precise stages, but at the same time the order in which they are reached and the means used to pass through them vary with each way and each school. Nor is the final level of attainment the same on the different ways. But in spite of these different aspects, what is possible to man

in general, and the methods of his eventual evolution, obey the same laws and the same rules everywhere. All of this is connected with the reasons why the exercises for work on oneself given in schools are not committed to memory. Or, if they are, such writings are accessible only to people who already have enough experience of the exercises and have practiced them long enough under the direction of their elders to understand what they stand for within the line of work of the particular school. All the same, there is no secrecy involved. There is only the fact that nobody can understand experiences of this kind without having undergone them himself. A false understanding, be it insufficient, partial or mistaken, is the worst thing that can happen to the individual as well as to the school – thus everything possible is done to avoid it. (2)

Many of the published transcripts of Gurdjieff's meetings exclude certain detailed descriptions of the exercises, as much of the specifics of the exercises were imparted orally. During his lifetime and for decades thereafter, the instructions of his exercises were kept secret from the public and only discussed and practiced within Work circles. Currently, most of the exercises given by Gurdjieff have been discontinued in the Gurdjieff Foundations of Europe, North America and South America.

The exercises were meant to be practised in the context of everyday life rather than in a monastic setting. Some of the exercises were done in a quiet secluded setting free of distraction, while others were performed in the midst of the hubbub of daily life. Sometimes, however, exercises would be practised in both solitude and worldly conditions.

Certain exercises appear to be improvised by Gurdjieff himself or modified from ones he discovered in his extensive travels. Some exercises were given to groups while others were tailored for individual needs, based on each pupil's 'type' and level of knowledge and development. The various forms of the exercises were unified by certain underlying principles, much like tree branches emanating from a central trunk. Joseph Azize:

One might wonder why Gurdjieff would fashion various exercises that were so similar, but the inescapable conclusion is that this was intentional on his part. The exercises often seem to fall into variations on a theme, showing the extent to which they were an artistic form of teaching. He told Annie-Lou Staveley that when he taught them any exercise, he gave them a skeleton, and it was for them to place flesh on it. That is, Gurdjieff provided a paradigm that then had to be applied or renewed, as it were, each time the exercises were attempted. Solange Claustres explained her understanding of the principle this way: "I never took refuge in an exercise. I understood the principle of it without knowing it consciously. It happened naturally in me, through a life instinct." The apparent improvisation of exercises, where we see them given in the course of group meetings in Paris between 1941 and 1946, relates to this. The "fleshing out" would take place extempore, in the presence of an immediate demand. It may even be that they were *ideally* fleshed out in such circumstances. The challenge when improvising was only augmented by Gurdjieff's instruction that the exercises were always to be given and to be worked at *precisely*, never "approximately." As Gurdjieff said in an undated transcript: "One must work precisely on something precise. Work should not be a desire, but a need." (3)

Throughout his teaching enterprise in the West, Gurdjieff developed new exercises and refined them over time. Some of the exercises were lost due to the fact that they were orally transmitted and not transcribed or recorded in pupils' memoirs or their recollections of work with him. His ability to create new exercises was virtually an art: "By the time of his Paris groups during World War II, he was almost a virtuoso at improvising original exercises, while generally but not always keeping to a few simple principles." (4)

Exercises were given both individually and in groups. Gurdjieff worked with each student in accordance with their needs and future possibilities. He organized his groups on the basis of the level of development of its members. As a general rule, simpler or preliminary exercises preceded more difficult ones. More advanced students and groups received more complex and challenging exercises. John G. Bennett describes the challenges of one such exercise in his autobiography *Witness*:

Gurdjieff had set me to work upon a spiritual exercise that completely baffled me, for it required the attainment of a state of motionless equilibrium of all the psychic functions, and yet the absence of any constraint or effort of attention. When he first explained it to me, it seemed simple compared to the complicated and very difficult exercises, connected with control of the energies of sensation, feeling and thought, that I had been working on before. Its very simplicity made it supremely difficult to accomplish. (5)

Exercises were generally given in a specific sequence – each exercise enabled the following one to be successfully worked with and completed through the energy generated by the preceding one. However, in his later years Gurdjieff gave advanced, complicated exercises before more preliminary ones, a practice that was not followed in earlier teaching phases. In his biography *Gurdjieff Reconsidered*, Roger Lipsey speculates that this was because of his advanced age: "How much longer could he live and teach? Better to share them with his pupils than leave them unsaid." (6)

As students progress in their development, the inner exercise became more complex and difficult. But when they succeeded in their tasks, the rewards were deeply felt and invigorated their resolve to continue on the path of conscious development. Kathryn Hulme writes of her experiences in *Undiscovered Country*:

We began a Third Series of exercises under the master's guidance. The new work was complex and required a sustained inner attention beyond anything ever before attempted. The kind of "being efforts" we struggled over, he told us, had been called "self-beatings" by the adepts of an old monastic order he had visited in the days of his searchings. "Self-beatings" perfectly described our intensified efforts to dominate the recalcitrant selves. There was never any feeling of masochism, such as "self-beatings" seemed to imply. There was, to the contrary, the deepest inner satisfaction any of us had ever known – the "earned pearl," as Gurdjieff expressed it, that lay in the center of our beings after each session of work. A work on the self that now went beyond the self . . . (7)

In his Institute at the Prieuré in France, Gurdjieff divided the practical exercises into seven broad categories based on their “center of gravity”:

1. Body
2. Mind
3. Feeling
4. Mind and body together
5. Body and feeling together
6. Body, mind and feeling together
7. Body, mind and feeling together with our automatism (8)

The more complex exercises manifest two or more centers simultaneously and are more challenging to perform. But all of them were intended to develop a conscious presence (“I am”) and a balanced development of the functions:

Gurdjieff introduced many exercises and tasks that focused on establishing a separated *presence* (*via directed attention*) in one, two or all three centers. Sensing exercises assist the establishment of a separated *presence* in the physical body (in a part or in the whole); exercises that focus on the breath and on the feeling world of relationships aim to establish a *presence* in the Kesdjanian Octave of Air; tasks and exercises that challenge the intellect, for example, through pondering and studying of the laws, assist in establishing a *presence* in the Octave of Impressions, the results of the coating process of Higher Being-body that leads towards Objective Reason. Some exercises evoke efforts in more than one center, preeminent among them being the efforts demanded by certain of the sacred dances and movements. (9)

A wide range of exercise types, of varying levels of difficulty, were employed to aid pupils’ movement toward self-knowledge and eventually self-realization. Certain exercises were practised in quiet settings, others in the circumstances of everyday life. Some were repeated daily, others only at specified times. None of the exercises were to be discussed outside of the context of the Work:

- Relaxation and control of muscles
- Sensing and scanning different parts of the body
- Breathing exercises
- Sacred dances and Movements
- ‘Collected state’ exercises
- Exercises in attention
- ‘Contemplative mentation’
- Visualization
- Affirmations, repetition of words and phrases
- Work on habits and conditioned behaviour
- Aids to self-remembering
- Counting, word, and memory exercises
- Psychological exercises
- Study of ‘imitation psychic phenomena’

A certain mystique surrounds Gurdjieff's plethora of inner exercises, as he left few clues to their origins and often provided incomplete instructions or indefinite indications of their situational usage or "shelf life." In his extensive study of the exercises, Joseph Azize concludes:

We have had to consider a rather wide range of sources, even to analyze those sources that hailed from Gurdjieff and de Salzmänn's books, and transcripts of the Adies. Gurdjieff certainly did not leave all the relevant information in one place. It seems like he gave exercises like Conscious Stealing and the Four Ideals to Bennett, but not to very many others. To be more precise, it seems to me that the general nature of the instruction was fairly widely circulated, but the technical details concerning attracting the higher substances, then ingesting and assimilating them, were passed on to very few. This seems to me to be deliberate. It is as if his book *Meetings with Remarkable Men* was a template for what his pupils were to do; meeting with one another. If I am correct, then Gurdjieff was effectively obliging them to communicate and exchange in order to complete their own education. His contemplative exercises were to be a discovery, or else were to disappear – and there is no doubt that some of them have indeed disappeared. (10)

Instruments of Self-development

Gurdjieff employed numerous practical exercises to help his pupils develop their level of consciousness and being. One of the intentions of his exercises was to create a state which facilitated the sense of "I am" or a conscious presence. Jean Vaysse: "There is a necessary initial step, whatever work exercise is being practiced: this is always to remind ourselves why we are undertaking this effort and to find again in ourselves that which feels a need for this work and the line of interest it is connected to. An exercise of this kind has no meaning unless it is connected each time to our need to become a little more conscious." (11)

Gurdjieff's contemplation-like exercises were designed so that the outer life (life in the social domain) and the inner lives should be harmonized by the development of one's individual reality, with consciousness, conscience, and will. Then persons could project an aim and attain to it – that is, they could 'do.' The longer Gurdjieff went, the more that he came to believe that quiet time, undistracted, with the three main brains working together for an aim, what he called a 'special state,' was necessary. (12)

The other primary aim was the assimilation and transformation of higher energies, which he described as "the sacred cosmic substances required for the coating of the highest-being-body, which sacred being-part of theirs they call soul." (13) This followed Gurdjieff's view that human beings are 'stations' for the transformation of higher energies, as schematically depicted in the 'Food Diagram.' Knowledge of this diagram, and his cosmological principles, forms the basis of understanding his inner exercises.

The exercises Gurdjieff assigned to his students, whether for daily life or for quiet contemplation, provided them with insights into their ‘false personality’ and conditioned behaviour. He furnished feedback to each pupil, modifying exercises and adding new ones, as he guided them along the path of inner development:

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 pupil’s 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. (14)

When working on themselves, Gurdjieff recommended that his pupils begin with simple inner tasks such as the breaking of small habits. Attempting greater tasks beyond a person’s capacity actually prevents them from succeeding in simpler, but doable, tasks:

QUESTION: Would a good task be to bear the manifestations of others?

GURDJIEFF: To bear the manifestations of others is a big thing. The last thing for a man. Only a perfect man can do this. Start by making your “aim” or your “God” the ability to bear the manifestations of one person that you now cannot endure without nervousness. Taking a voluntary aim and achieving it gives magnetism and the ability to “do.”

QUESTION: I think my worst fault is talking too much. Would trying not to talk so much be a good task?

GURDJIEFF: For you, this is a very good aim. You spoil everything with your talking. This talk even hinders your business. When you talk much, your words have no weight. Try to overcome this. Many blessings will flow to you if you succeed. Truth, this is a very good task. But it is a big thing, not small. (15)

To be effective, exercises must involve not only the mind but also feeling and sensing. As Gurdjieff was fond of saying, “The head is only the director which shows the way.” The exercises may be seen as vehicles to bring the lower centers into balance and harmony, which aligns them to the higher centers. This provides the foundation for the states of self-consciousness and eventually objective consciousness.

The importance of attaining a balanced development in which intellect, feeling and sensation all contribute to the process of inner development was highlighted by Jeanne de Salzmann in *The Reality of Being*: “When all the centers are engaged in the same question, they awaken and come closer. When they are truly together, I can *be*, and I can *do* something consciously. But only when they are together . . . What determines a collected state is that my thought does not wander. It does not leave me. With associations my thoughts wander, but when it is collected it remains in me. My feeling also does not project itself. I am occupied with feeling ‘I am’.” (16)

All of Gurdjieff's exercises have one feature in common – they require a high degree of *attention* (17) to counteract the continuous flow of associative thoughts, feelings and sensations that characterize our mental life. Through self-remembering can one overcome the associations that carry one into imagination and identification. It is possible to focus the whole of the attention on either an inner or outer object without the interference of automatic associations. The exercises helped pupils to accomplish this inner task.

When practising an exercise, attention can be divided in a number of directions. For instance, one part of attention can be focused on breathing, on the cycle of inhalation and exhalation. Another part of the attention may be simultaneously directed to certain parts of the body. Jeanne de Salzmann describes one such exercise given by Gurdjieff:

I divide my attention into two equal parts. The first half I direct to sensing the process of my breathing. I feel that when I inhale the air, the greater portion, after passing through my lungs, returns outside, while a small portion remains and settles in me. I feel that this penetrates inside, as though spreading through the whole organism. As only one part of my attention is occupied in observing the breathing, all the associations continue to be noticed by the free part of my attention. I then direct this second part to my brain, trying to observe clearly the entire process that takes place, and I begin to feel something very fine, almost imperceptible, freeing itself from the associations. I do not know what this "something" is, but I see it appear – small, light, so delicate that it can be felt only after practice brings the sensation of it. Half of my attention remains occupied with the breathing, and I feel the two at the same time. Now I direct the second part of my attention to assist this fine "something" in my brain to flow directly to the solar plexus . . . Consciously, I concentrate on this, and at the same time I feel that I am breathing. I have no more associations. And I feel more fully that "I am," "I can," and "I will." From the air and from the mind, I receive food for different bodies, and I see then with certainty the two real sources from which the "I" can be born. (18)

Working with the Exercises

In order to work with the exercises properly and maximize the benefits accrued from them, Gurdjieff instructed his students to follow specific guidelines. These indications were very precise and he stressed the importance of following them exactly as he taught them. Kenneth Walker reports a conversation with his teacher along those lines:

"This that I tell you is for you alone and it must not be discussed with other people." He would then outline some psychological or physiological exercise and would give us very precise instructions on how the 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 taking in grave and convincing tones. At such time 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. (19)

When practising exercises, Gurdjieff counselled his students to do them “without excessive zeal, without self-enthusing, which is a very harmful property.” (20) He stressed that every exercise must be done calmly without tension or agitation: “When you are calm, you can work twice as much. Five minutes can give you more [results] than an hour. It depends on relaxation. It is necessary to learn how to relax.” (21) Jeanne de Salzmann echoed Gurdjieff’s advice: “The most important exercise is to have the body as relaxed as possible in every situation. During quiet work, there should be no tension. That will allow the relationship with higher energy.” (22)

Three factors can deepen the ability to work consciously on a task or exercise:

1. Reducing physical tensions, negative emotions, and associative thinking in order to economize the expenditure of energy
2. Mindfulness of one’s breathing
3. Sensing certain parts of the body to deepen sensation in order to come to the state of “I am”

Gurdjieff also gave practical advice to enhance the effect of an exercise or task. To fulfil a voluntary aim, he proposed a simple exercise to overcome resistance and lack of energy: “Sit still for a period of at least one hour alone. Make all muscles relaxed. Allow associations to proceed but do not be absorbed or identified with them . . . Only when everything in you is quiet for an hour, then make your decision about your aim.” (23)

Gurdjieff also provided a greater context for the exercises. When working with his group ‘the Rope’ on a series of new, complex exercises requiring sustained inner attention, he asked them to take a pledge that they would use them for all humanity and not just for themselves. One of the members, Kathryn Hulme, was especially affected by his words:

This ‘good-wishing-for-all’ vow, so deeply moving in intent, had a tremendous effect on me. For the first time in my life, I felt that I was truly doing something for humanity as I strove to make my own molecule of it more perfect. The meaning of this work, which at first had seemed quite egotistical and self-centered, suddenly blossomed out like a tree of life encompassing in its myriad branches the entire human family. (24)

Gurdjieff constantly admonished his pupils *not to expect results* within a given time period or identify with any immediate changes in psychology or physiology that may occur. Under no circumstances were students to force the inner process – only patient repetition of an exercise would bear fruit.

When performing an exercise, right effort was more important than the outcome. In a meeting with his Paris group in 1943 he emphasized this point: “What is useful is the effort. Whether you succeed or not is not important. Do it as a duty. The struggle will have a result that you will discover later.” (25) And in a later conversation that year he elaborated on the effect of a conscious effort: “Effort generates a certain substance, and

once that substance begins to act, everything follows from that . . . When an effort is made, a substance of a special quality is produced in us, and this substance, along with everything else, helps us to work.” (26)

The insistence on effort and struggle rather than seeking results was a constant theme throughout Gurdjieff's teaching tenure. In the summer of 1916, he spoke to his Russian students about the efforts necessary to fulfill the tasks and exercises he assigned to them: “You must understand that ordinary efforts do not count. *Only super-efforts count* . . . Those who do not wish to make super-efforts had better give up everything and take care of their health.” And when asked about the dangers of super-efforts he replied, “It is better to die making efforts to awaken than to live in sleep . . . For another thing it is not so easy to die from efforts. We have much more strength than we think. But we never make use of it.” (27)

Gurdjieff provided some examples of super-efforts, which he defined as “an effort beyond the effort necessary to achieve a given purpose.” P.D. Ouspensky recorded a conversation in 1916 in Essentuki which deeply impressed upon him the nature of a super-effort:

Imagine that I have been walking all day and am very tired. The weather is bad, it is raining and cold. In the evening I arrive home. I have walked, perhaps twenty-five miles. In the house there is supper; it is warm and pleasant. But, instead of sitting down to supper, I go out into the rain again and decide to walk another two miles along the road and then return home. This would be a super-effort. While I was going home it was simple an effort and this does not count. I was on my way home, the cold, hunger, the rain – all this made me walk. In the other case I walk because I myself decide to do so. This kind of super-effort becomes still more difficult when I do not decide upon it myself but obey a teacher who at an unexpected moment requires from me to make fresh efforts when I have decided that efforts for the day are over. Another form of super-effort is carrying out any kind of work at a faster rate than is called for by the nature of the work. You are doing something – let us say you are washing up or chopping wood. You have an hour's work. Do it in half an hour – this will be a super-effort. (28)

Gurdjieff pointed out that very few people are capable of making super-efforts of their own volition and that the will of a teacher, within the framework of an esoteric school, is necessary to initiate and maintain the required motivation to make a super-effort possible (29).

The necessity of daily practice of the exercises, no matter the circumstances or one's personal inclination, was constantly stressed by Gurdjieff. The importance of repetition was his favorite mantra: “Repeat, repeat, repeat. Only this will bring results . . . Practice, practice as you would to play the piano.” (30) Only by sustained repetition is it possible to achieve permanent results, he counselled. When speaking to members of ‘the Rope’ he emphasized this point time and time again:

About your exercises, you will not do one time, not 100 times, but 1001 times you will do and something will happen. Now is your imagination, but sooner or later will be fact . . . Everyday struggle little by little make data your future depends. You must think of yourself as a baby you take care of and lead by hand. After you do, it is necessary to rest twice as long as you have done the exercise. Be passive afterward. (31)

Because of the demands of everyday living, Gurdjieff told his pupils to set aside a time each day for inner work and then gradually increase the duration. For beginners he indicated that even 5-10 minutes of real work was helpful and can be slowly increased to 30 minutes. As students progressed the exercises became more complex and he sounded a cautionary note: “The task is a very complicated thing. You cannot do it for a very long time. You are soon tired; it takes all your strength. If you do it for five minutes too much, you are drained of all your strength.” (32)

With more seasoned students, the time frame could be extended. As a general rule he suggested that a maximum of three hours a day for inner work, which could be spread out over the morning, afternoon and evening. But for every student, regardless of their state of development, the quality of the work was paramount, not the quantity. Gurdjieff was clear: “Work a short time, but work well. Here it isn’t the quantity but the quality that counts. Life is ne thing, the work another thing. Do not mix it with other things. Five minutes of good work, is worth more than twenty-four hours of another kind.” (33)

In certain exercises the proper posture is very important in the execution and eventual outcome. For maximum results, and in congruence with the practices of other spiritual traditions, a stable posture with an erect spine is recommended. (34) Jeanne de Salzmann: “The postures assumed by the body are always the same and provide corresponding postures or attitudes in the mind and the feeling that are also the same . . . The body has its repertoire of postures that imprisons me. I have to find a position, inner and outer, that will free me from my attitudes and allow me to emerge from sleep to open to another dimension, another world.” (35) De Salzmann describes the proper orientation of the body when practising quiet mediation:

In the work in the quiet, the posture of the body is very important. It must be precise in order to allow a field of energy to be established. At the same time, I must feel an ease, a well-being, a kind of stability that allows my mind to come to a state of total availability, to empty itself in a natural way, to let go of the agitation of thoughts. With a right posture my centers come together and can be related. This requires close and continual cooperation between my thought, my feeling and my body. As soon as they separate, the posture is no longer held. We are seeking stability. What is always essential is the position of the spine, which should be at the same time free and straight. When it is not straight, there cannot be a right relation between sensation and thought, or thought and feeling. Each part remains isolated without a real connection with the others. But if the spine is straight, we feel that the energy contained in the body has an action on the body. Its density changes. There is no longer a form and a Presence – they are one and the same. (36)

Gurdjieff often recommended a period of quiet preparation to physically relax and collect oneself before beginning an exercise. Entering a quiet relaxed state breaks the tempo of ordinary life. Then, before starting the exercise, he suggested an affirmation to reinforce one's intention and create the proper attitude and aim:

To arouse feeling, interest and attention, for cooperation you must think the following before beginning: "I am now about to begin this exercise. With full attention I will draw my breath, saying 'I' and sensing the whole of myself. I wish very much to do this in order that I may digest air." To arouse the body to cooperate, take corresponding posture. Inner tension of forces mobilizes your centers for working together for this aim. "I am now about to begin this exercise which will enable me, with the aid of conscious labor, to coat the higher bodies in myself from the active elements in the air I breathe." (37)

At the end of an exercise, students were instructed to remain for some period of time (he often suggested 10-20 minutes) in a *collected state* before returning to their normal daily activities. A collected state is a condition of relaxed attention and simultaneous awareness of sensation, feeling and one's presence. "It is normal to be tired. At the end of an exercise, it is necessary to maintain the collected state as long as possible, to allow one's nature to assimilate the result." (38) Gurdjieff also indicated that this could be a time for quiet reflection and even personal prayer.

By remaining in a collected state following an exercise, students could solidify the results of the exercise and calmly assimilate the higher substances "deposited" in them which otherwise would be dispersed. A secondary purpose was that when entering daily life later they could recall and re-experience their collected state.

Cautions and Concerns

In virtually every living spiritual teaching there are numerous body-mind practices and inner exercises. These are traditionally transmitted to aspirants by teachers who have received them from their spiritual lineage or found them beneficial for their own growth. But without proper guidance, the ability to carefully discriminate, and the rejection of thoughtless experimentation, these practices can be useless or even harmful. As technical instruments they must be respected, and properly implemented and utilized.

- Exercises must be correctly prescribed and guided in their application by a qualified and knowledgeable teacher.
- Individual differences and the level of development of each student must be taken into account. (39)
- Methods and techniques imported from the East are often inappropriate for the Western mind and culture. (40)
- Students often have unrealistic expectations or expect immediate results.
- There may be unexpected side-effects or consequences, even psychological or physiological harm, when improperly employed.

Spiritual exercises are very precise technical instruments. But when they are used improperly, they produce either no useful results or negative effects and consequences. It is crucial that the instructions are followed exactly as given, without experimenting or introducing modifications. Jeanne de Salzmann sounds a stark warning in regard to inner exercises which should only be attempted with the requisite need and proper understanding: In *The Reality of Being*, she writes:

An exercise is always a temporary aid, a means to help me take a step that I need to take, to see my situation better and to understand the effort I have to make. It can be a help only at the moment when I need it and understand its sense. Otherwise, the exercise will in no way help and, on the contrary, may prevent further understanding. This is why it is so important never to experiment blindly with an exercise or do an exercise that was given for others. In undertaking an exercise, I must first ask myself why I am doing it, and if I really want to do it. Otherwise, the exercise will be done passively and, because passivity never brings understanding, it will not help me. (41)

When abused, spiritual methods and exercises can lead to unexpected and undesirable consequences. The choice and application of exercises must take into account many different factors and conditions in order to be effective. C.S. Nott was a long-time student of Gurdjieff and speaks from experience on these matters. In *Teachings of Gurdjieff*, he cautions: “Only when every particular of man’s organic and psychic condition, as well as upbringing and all the circumstances of his life are taken into account, is the use of strictly individualized methods of training of this kind possible. To determine and prescribe for these conditions accurately a long period of time is necessary.” (42)

A man is unable to carry on [inner] struggle alone and by his own efforts. Nor can he profit by the many methods of self-training and personal development in vogue (whether produced at home or imported from the Orient) which recommend indiscriminately methods and exercises. These methods are prescribed for everyone, with no regard for individual needs and abilities, and take no account of personal peculiarities. Not only are they useless, they may even be dangerous; those who attempt to repair a defective machine without all-round and deep understanding may bring about certain changes, but these changes will cause other things which an inexperienced person can neither foresee nor guard against. The human machine is always in equilibrium, whether it is running smoothly or not; therefore any change brought about in one place is bound to bring about a change in another place, and it is absolutely necessary that this should be foreseen and allowed for. (43)

Gurdjieff’s students encountered a number of obstacles when working with the exercises he gave them. For many exercises, the initial stage is to acquire a state of inner quiet. However, beginners inevitably reported that it was virtually impossible to silence the constant flow of mental associations (the “monkey mind”). He told his pupils not to *try* to stop them: “You can *never* stop associations. These are automatic. Therefore, in this task, you must not try to stop them; let associations flow but *not be active*. With the

other part of your mind you work at this new task, and this is active. Soon you find you have the beginnings of a new kind of brain – a new one for this kind of mentation. And then, the other one becomes entirely passive. Very important that you know [your self] *as a whole*, for this work, very important.” (44)

Gurdjieff continually warned his students that one of the perils of practising inner exercises is the expectation of “results” or visible progress. Efforts, he said, must be persistent and without any preconceptions of outcome. Fritz Peters recounts a conversation with Gurdjieff along these lines in *Boyhood with Gurdjieff*:

One of the most frequent obstacles was that, at times, the performance of a particular exercise would produce a state of exhilaration or well-being. He said that while such a state of exhilaration was proper to the correct and serious performance of such exercises, one danger lay in our misconception of “results” or “progress.” It was necessary to remember that we should not expect results at all. If we did an exercise expecting a certain result, it was valueless. But, if we achieved a recognizable result, such as a feeling of genuine well-being, even though this was a proper, temporary result, it did not in any sense mean that one had “achieved” anything permanent. It could mean that some progress was being made but it was then necessary to work that much harder in order to make such “results” a permanent part of oneself. (45)

Students report that working with the exercises was never an easy task as even the simplest of them presented many different challenges, ranging from distraction and wavering attention to feelings of discouragement. C.S. Nott describes the roller-coaster of experiences that characterized some of his efforts:

As for the inner exercises, they never became easy. Each day I had to make an effort to start them and an effort to continue them. A fly, or a movement of something, a sound, would distract me and divert my attention; (‘Where my attention is, there am I’) or I would find myself falling asleep, or tensing myself instead of relaxing. More often my attention would be caught up by something or other in the stream of associations – physical, emotional or mental – which begin at birth and never stop until death. Caught up in this stream, my attention would be dispersed in day-dreaming, or in disputing with an imaginary person, or talking to myself . . . When my exercises were interrupted by exterior or interior happenings, I would have to re-collect myself and begin again; and I acquired more real force from the exercises than from working in the fields. The force came from constantly compelling myself to overcome the inertia of the organism and its unwillingness to do the exercise. There was almost always the struggle between ‘I’ who wished to do them and ‘it’ which did not wish to do them; as if the organism were in a way fulfilling its functions of the denying part against the affirming of ‘I wish.’ Constant struggle between the affirming and denying leads to understanding – of oneself, those around us, and the universe. (46)

There was one group exercise that Gurdjieff deemed especially prone to misuse – the “stop” exercise. At an unexpected moment, the teacher would yell “stop” and every student would have to freeze their position and maintain this posture until told to end it. Students quickly discovered that it “was not all a joke.” It required not only alertness and presence, but also considerable endurance and determination. Unless performed directly under the direction of a knowledgeable teacher, there were unfavorable ramifications and even life-threatening consequences. P.D. Ouspensky recounts a talk in which Gurdjieff stressed the dangers of the exercise:

“The ‘stop’ exercise is considered sacred in schools,” he said. Nobody except the principal teacher or the person he commissions has the right to command a ‘stop.’ ‘Stop’ cannot be the subject of play or exercise among the pupils. You never know the position a man can find himself in. If you cannot *feel for him*, you do not know what muscles are tensed or how much. Meanwhile if a difficult tension is continued it can cause the rupture of some important vessel and in some cases it can even cause immediate death. Therefore only he who is quite certain in himself that he knows what he is doing can allow himself to command a ‘stop.’” (47)

The importation of Eastern spiritual methods to the West and the abuse of breathing exercises was also a concern to Gurdjieff. John Bennett: “Gurdjieff regarded breathing exercises as particularly sacred and at the same time perilous. He was shocked by the way in which breathing exercise, particularly those of the Indian yogis, had been introduced into the West and employed to produce states of ecstasy and to develop certain powers of perception and experience.” (48)

In *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, he warns his readers about the dangers of experimenting with breathing exercises learned from books or the instructions of ignorant “teachers.” In the book he recounts a conversation with a Persian dervish in which the unintended consequences of unnatural breathing were laid bare in stark terms:

All the exercises in breathing which are given in books and taught in contemporary esoteric schools can do nothing but harm . . . Artificial breathing, that is to say, a forced modification of natural breathing, facilitates the penetration into the organism of numerous substances in the air which are harmful to life, and at the same time upsets the quantitative and qualitative balance of the useful substances . . . Our organism is a very complicated apparatus. It has many organs with processes of different tempos and with different needs. You must either change everything or nothing. Otherwise, instead of good you might do harm. (49)

The dervish spoke of further deleterious consequences of artificial breathing. The tempos of the functioning of the different organs of the body are altered through manipulation of the breath and, because all human organs are interrelated, multiple organs are affected. This can lead to many different illnesses such as damage to the stomach, liver, kidneys or nervous system as well as the enlargement of the heart or constriction of the windpipe.

The dervish summed up with an apt analogy of the dangers of interfering with the natural functioning of the physical body: “If you know every small screw, every little pin of your machine, only then can you know what you must do. But if you just know a little and experiment, you risk a great deal, because the machine is very complicated. There are many tiny screws which might easily be broken by a strong shock. Therefore, my advice to you is to stop your breathing exercises.” (50)

Following Gurdjieff’s death in 1949, some of his exercises were abandoned, some were displaced by other “comparable” exercises. Some were modified or mixed with other exercises. With such an adulteration, the power of the original exercises were diminished or even destroyed. This process is common in many spiritual teachings when a teacher dies and the followers “reinvent” the teaching.

In his recent biography *Gurdjieff Reconsidered: The Life, the Teachings, the Legacy*, Roger Lipsey assesses the current state of published exercises which are available to the general public, as well as examining the ramifications of their misuse when taken out of the context of a comprehensive spiritual teaching:

Exercises taught by Gurdjieff have as a rule been little published, little discussed, and those who have nonetheless chosen over the years to publish and discuss leave an invisible tarnish where they have done so. Exercises are skeletal except in conditions which give them flesh and force. The same needn’t be said of Gurdjieff’s ideas, writings, conversation, and teaching style: they have their place in the long history of teachings and belong openly to that part of our culture concerned for millennia with inner development . . . But the exercises he offered his pupils, like the “empowerments” in Tibetan tradition, come under a stricter rule. They pass orally from person to person – “from mouth to ear,” as some traditions put it – and the flow of insights and substantive change to which they can give rise depends on concentration and discretion. Absent sustained focus among a certain number of concerned people, an exercise even of real merit and depth easily becomes words on a page. Some say that exercises separated from a setting of that kind can be dangerous; I don’t know that this I do. I do know that they lose much. Like butterflies pinned in a collector’s field journal, they can be gaudy and intriguing, but they lived elsewhere. I should add that the Gurdjieff literature is not self-policing except in the barest sense of copyright protection: materials are published from time to time that lack validity or serious care. (51)

Physical, Relaxation, Sensing and Breathing Exercises

Gurdjieff placed great importance on the state and role of the body, and stressed the fact that it provides the most direct contact with reality and forms the foundation for inner growth and development. He described the aim of the Work as “constantly having a sensation of oneself. This sensation cannot be expressed intellectually because it is organic.” (52) Therefore, one of the most important aspects of inner work is the study of the functioning of the body. In *The Making of Man*, Kenneth Walker highlights the emphasis Gurdjieff placed on bodily exercises:

He gave us special instructions and special exercises for the training of our attention, for the relaxing of our muscles, and for evoking body sensations in us. By carrying out these special exercises we learned how important it was to become aware of our bodies as a preliminary to becoming aware of ourselves as wholes. Whenever Gurdjieff talked to us about 'self-remembering' he told us that the first step was to become aware of our bodies and of the sensations which were coming to us from our bodies. Having taken up residence again within our bodies, after a long absence from them, it was comparatively easy for us to become aware not only of our bodies, but also of our various activities such as our movements, our thoughts and our feelings. Gurdjieff gave us a great many of these exercises for the training of our attention, for the relaxing of our muscles, and for the evoking of sensation in different parts of our bodies and they have been of the greatest use to us. (53)

Exercises for the Body

One of the first stages of inner work is to become more aware of our body and its various sensations. Jean Vaysse: "Initially, this work will most often be a matter of relaxation and sensation, later of self-remembering, following precise methods and under the surveillance of what it brings with it. To lose our way at this beginning may compromise any chance of future development." (54)

If we wish to study our body, or at least, to begin with, its moving function, its movement, we must first of all be related to it. What relates us to the body is the sensation we have of it – the inner perception of my physical being, the physical sensation of myself. But sensation has an even greater importance because, if our aim is eventually to develop a stable presence in ourselves, the sensation of our physical being is an inherent part of this. It is the most concrete and easily controlled part. We always have some sensation of our body; otherwise our postures could not be maintained, our movements would be made haphazardly, or not at all. But we are not conscious of this sensation, we are unaware of it, except in extreme situations when an unusual effort is required or when something suddenly goes badly or goes wrong. In order to know and observe ourselves and to study our body and later to support our work, we need to have this sensation. This calls for a new relationship to come into existence in me: I – conscious of – my sensation . . . What we need immediately is a stable sensation: that is, we need to develop a more steady and longer lasting consciousness of our body and its situation. (55)

At his institute, a wide range of exercises were prescribed to awaken an awareness of the body and its functions. Sometimes this involved difficult gymnastic positions combined with affirmations: "Hold your arms crosswise fifteen, twenty minutes, a half hour, while thinking 'I am,' 'I want to be.' Think it with the body. Feel your body. (56)

In other instances, long periods of manual work were assigned to students to provide them opportunities to observe themselves in situations where they were fatigued to the point where they would reveal previously hidden aspects of themselves. Sometimes a

stressful exercise served the same purpose: “Hold the arms outstretched to the side for seven minutes, increasing one minute each day, before you begin your work. The fatigue you experience in this way will be twice as great as manual labor.” (57)

Many of the physical exercises were initially developed and tested during the early phases of Gurdjieff’s teaching in Russia and later in Essentuki, Tiflis and Constantinople. P.D. Ouspensky describes some of the more advanced exercises that were given during this period to more advanced pupils:

G. showed us the different methods that were used in schools. Very interesting but unbelievably difficult were exercise in which a whole series of consecutive movements were performed in connection with taking the attention from one part of the body to another. For instance, a man sits on the ground with knees bent and holding his arms, with the palms of his hands close together, between his feet. Then he has to lift one leg and during this time count: *om, om, om, om, om, om, om, om, om, om*, up to the tenth *om* and then nine times *om*, eight times *om*, seven times *om*, and so on, down to one and then again twice *om*, three times *om*, and so on, and at the same time “sense” his right eye. Then separate the thumb and “sense” his left ear and so on and so on. It was necessary first to remember the order of the movements and “sensing,” then not to go wrong in the counting, to remember the count of movements and sensing. This was very difficult but it did not end the affair. When a man had mastered this exercise and could do it, say, for about ten or fifteen minutes, he was given, in addition, a special form of breathing . . . Beyond this there were still greater and greater complications of the exercise up to almost impossible things. (58)

Later, at the Prieuré in France, he introduced physical tasks accompanied with mental tasks such as learning long lists of words in a foreign language. This required a double attention which created a concentrated or collected state of consciousness. Thomas de Hartmann describes these efforts in *Our Life with Mr. Gurdjieff*:

During the summer and autumn of 1923, our work by day was physical labour in the open air, but something more was added. We were given long lists of words to memorize. Mr. Gurdjieff insisted that we should not set aside special time for it, but do it while working in the garden. In the course of trying this I made one very important discovery. Usually when one observes oneself during physical labour, particularly work consisting of repetitive movements like digging and scything, one’s thoughts wander freely in directions that have nothing to do with the labour. Associations flow, following one another in complete disorder, without goal and without result. Now that Mr. Gurdjieff had added these memory exercises during just such work, there was no room for leaks of wandering associations. At times it was necessary to stir oneself and direct attention to the digging itself, which at other times became almost unconscious. But the characteristic feature in all this was complete collectiveness. Not a single bit of consciousness wandered away beyond the limits of the person. Everything was concentrated inside. This is one example of the many varieties of the work, which always has as its ultimate goal the development of the person’s being. (59)

Fasting of various kinds and degrees was also carried out during the early stages of Gurdjieff's teaching in Russia and at the Prieuré. He stressed that during the fast, the digestive substances of the body be used up through strenuous physical exercise (60).

Relaxation Exercises

Gurdjieff first introduced relaxation and sensing exercises in 1917 at Essentuki during a six-week period of intensive inner work. He stressed the importance of observing and directly sensing muscular tension in various parts of the body and then relaxing any unnecessary tension of the muscles. Relaxation of the body, he told his pupils, is a prerequisite for further sensing exercises.

In any inner work activity, he emphasized the importance of reducing bodily tension and economizing energy through conscious relaxation. This prepared the soil for further self-exploration and self-awareness. He noted that the tension in our bodies impedes the process of inner transformation. Setting time aside each day to relax the body, from head to toe, is one of the first exercises given to novices. He told them to exercise each time as if it were the first time, and then let it go. In *In Search of the Miraculous*, Ouspensky describes exercises given by Gurdjieff for the relaxation of certain parts of the body and for the control over unnecessary muscular tension:

He gave us many exercises for gradually relaxing the muscles *always beginning with the muscles of the face*, as well as exercises for “feeling” the hands, the feet, the fingers, and so on at will. The idea of the necessity of relaxing the muscles was not actually a new one, but G.’s explanation that relaxing the muscles of the body should begin with the muscles of the face was quite new to me . . . Very interesting was the exercise with a “circular sensation,” as G. called it. A man lies on his back on the floor. Trying to relax all his muscles, he then concentrates his attention on trying to sense his nose. When he begins to sense his nose the man then transfers his attention and tries to sense his ear; when this is achieved he transfers his attention to his right foot. From the right foot to the left; then to the left hand; then to the left ear and back again to the nose, and so on. (61)

The relaxation of the body has many degrees and requires persistent efforts. Student Hugh Ripman describes his personal experience: “There are gross muscular tensions in the face, which you can feel in clenching your jaw, as well as subtle tensions in the little muscles around the eye. I remember when I was first studying the tensions in my body, I found again and again before I could be confident that my face was really relaxed, I had to come back to it three or four times. It was like taking off a succession of masks.” (62)

Throughout the day, students were encouraged to relax their muscles and apply only the minimum amount of tension required for a given task. Gurdjieff: “You must work with as few parts of the body as possible. The principle of your work should be: to try to concentrate all the force you can on the parts of your body that are actually doing the work, at the expense of other parts.” (63) In a talk at the Prieuré in 1923, Gurdjieff shows his students how conscious control of the body can manifest in everyday life:

I now walk without tension, taking care only to keep my balance . . . I only give an initial push, the rest goes by momentum. In this way I cross the room without having wasted any force. To do this you must let the movement do itself; it does not depend on you . . . Try to relax everything except your legs, and walk. Pay particular attention to keeping your body passive, but the head and face must be alive. The tongue and the eyes must speak. (64)

Gurdjieff advocated a balance between tension and release for both our physical and emotional being. Either excessive tension or relaxation is counterproductive for inner work. By alleviating unnecessary muscular and emotional tension, the functioning of the centers is improved and they can work together effectively to produce the energy that is required for productive inner work: “The emphasis on being able to relax physically and emotionally was constant in Gurdjieff’s teaching; he even advised relaxing the legs to allow the organism as a whole to inhale properly. However, the process of relaxation had to be conscious for it to be of practical use. According to Gurdjieff: ‘It is only when you relax consciously, and when your head retains its role of policeman, that the relaxation has value’.” (65)

As pupils progressed in the relaxation exercises, they became more sensitive to the degree of tension in the various parts of the body. Gurdjieff distinguished three types of muscles – large, medium and small, each with their own degree of tension. The tension in the three types are also interrelated: “When you tense the large muscles, the small ones also tense themselves, but you don’t see them. When your large muscles are tense, the medium ones begin to tense, then the small ones too.” (66) In a meeting with his French students in 1943 he provided an exercise to relax all three sets of muscles:

Two, three times each day, when lying down, relax yourself. Your thoughts, your feelings, all your functions must be occupied with that. Your small muscles, your middling muscles, your large muscles must be relaxed . . . You don’t know our small muscles. You will get to know them when you start relaxing yourself. You will learn that you have three qualities of muscles, and these three qualities must become passive, without activity, completely tranquil, without action or manifestation . . . You have these three qualities of muscles in your finger as much as in your head. (67)

Sensing Exercises

Sensing exercises were one of the most important techniques in Gurdjieff’s repertoire of developmental methods. They focused on sensing specific parts of the body and were often accompanied by other inner practices such as breathing, counting, visualization and affirmation. Students typically began with simple sensing exercises before graduating to more advanced tasks in which multiple sensory and mental modalities were employed. This required the mobilization and application of a finer degree of attention and presence.

Developing a deeper awareness of the body and its sensations and achieving a relaxed state are important first steps in self-study. Jean Vaysse: “As regards the sensation of ourselves, before being able to follow how it changes as we move about and live, we

need to know it in a basic condition where we can immediately return to it, always the same, whenever it is needed for our inner work. And for the sensation of oneself, we can find this base only in complete relaxation.” (68)

In many of the sensing exercises, there was a specific order in which the body parts were sensed; for instance, right arm, right leg, left arm, left leg, solar plexus, head, body as a whole (69). The task was then intensified by, for instance, reciting the numbers from one to ten and then backwards from ten to one. The level of attention required for some of these exercises was both challenging and rewarding. (70)

Sensing exercises grounded the student in direct organic sensation and served as a foundation for further inner work. For instance, one exercise involved concentrating one’s attention on the upper arm and the solar plexus while at the same time observing the sensations of the head. The avowed purpose was to develop the power of concentration so that one can experience the sensation of “I am” at any place in the body. Gurdjieff: “I sense and feel these two parts, the top of the arm and the solar plexus, and at the same time, with my head, I observe what is going on . . . Afterwards, when you have experienced this with one part of your attention and with your head, you will be able to travel within yourself freely. Thanks to this exercise you will increase your power of concentration. It was made for that.” (71)

In his third series of writings, *Life is Real Only Then, When “I Am,”* Gurdjieff describes a sensing task, which he characterized as one of a series of “soil-preparing” exercises, involving dividing the attention into three parts. The purpose of the exercise was to prepare, in the being of the exercitant, “the possibility of intentionally composing data for the impulses sacred for man.” (72) It involved the simultaneous engagement of the operations of sensing, feeling and counting:

First, all of one’s attention must be divided approximately into three equal parts; each of these parts must be concentrated on one of the three fingers of the right or the left hand, for instance the forefinger, the third and the fourth, constatic in one finger – the result proceeding in it of the organic process called “sensing,” in another – the result of the process called “feeling,” and with the third – making any rhythmical movement and at the same time automatically conducting with the flowing of mental association a sequential or varied manner of counting. (73)

In order to strengthen a pupil’s “internal psychism of feeling,” Gurdjieff gave her an exercise to separate her “organic functions” from her essence or “individuality.” He told her the exercise would give her an enhancement of her functions, but added a cautionary note intended for the other pupils in the group: “You will be able to have a new interior, independent, and a new exterior, independent. You shall have a normal body and a normal psychism, without the abnormal ex-functions. This is solely for her and for no one else. Do not try to do it out of curiosity. It is a very dangerous thing.” (74) He instructed her to concentrate on four spots of the body where the arms are attached to the torso (shoulders) and the legs are attached to the body (hip joints). The details of this exercise are described in the transcripts of a meeting with his French students in 1944:

When you are working, when you self-remember, you have another state from the usual. It is necessary to separate these two states. For this there is an exercise, a whole series of exercises even. Here is the first: you do it, for example, seated, leaning comfortable installed in an armchair or on a couch. There is a spot where the arms are attached to the body (region of the shoulders), and a spot where the legs are attached to the body (hip joint); feel and control these four spots all the time. All your attention must be concentrated there . . . When you say “I am” imagine that these four spots are like four pillars on which is supported your “I am.” Focus your attention; not on the extremities nor to the interior of the body. All your concentration is fixed on these four places. Do this for your future real “me.” To begin, learn to know this state; it is like a measure, a clue. You will self-remember when you can feel well these four places. Leave all the rest. Live life as before. This is your only exercise, but do it very seriously so that all of the most concentrated moments of your work be based on those spots. (75)

For students who were properly prepared, Gurdjieff gave them a sensing exercise for “opening to a different state of being.” Jeanne de Salzmann describes the exercise in *The Reality of Being*:

This exercise begins with the consciousness that I am here. I say to myself, “Lord have mercy,” each time with a sensation of the four limbs, successively – right arm, right leg, left leg, left arm. I do this three times, and rest for one or two breaths. Then I breathe consciously, saying “I am”: with “I,” I take in the active elements of the air and mix them with the result obtained in the four limbs, and with “Am,” I exhale and distribute this into the sexual region. I repeat this second step three times. I then recover the result from the sexual region and send it to the spine, exhaling with “Am.” I begin again with the filling of the four limbs, remix with the active elements of the air, recharge the sexual region, recover from the sexual region and send it to fill the solar plexus. And I do the same to fill the head. Then I feel the whole Presence “I am” throughout the body. I nourish this Presence by taking the active elements from inhaling and sending them into the legs and the abdomen, then in succession the chest, the right arm, the left arm and the head. I make an inner act of engagement, saying to myself, “I wish to be, I wish and can be. I will do everything to make this last for a specific time. I will take all necessary measure to crystallize in myself this result for being. I will do everything to be.” (76)

Breathing Exercises

Although Gurdjieff warned against the misuse of breathing exercises learned from books or “imitation schools,” he did teach them to his pupils as a part of their inner work. The breathing practices were often prescribed in conjunction with relaxation and sensing exercises. During an exercise, he instructed them to not consciously change their normal breathing rhythm of inhalation and exhalation or to hold their breath. Rather, they should observe their breath and allow it to naturally slow down as the exercise progressed. They were also to note any change in their breathing pattern during an exercise. Under no

circumstances were they to artificially alter their breathing or attempt any manipulation of the breathing process beyond their normal capacities.

Gurdjieff emphasized the importance of correct breathing in both inner work and everyday life: “Be one with this feeling of breathing. Do not try to make a particular effort in breathing. Simply feel the breath – inhale, exhale, inhale, exhale.” (77)

He identified a continuum of breathing patterns ranging from the constricted and tense to a more relaxed rhythm of natural breathing. Jeanne de Salzmann describes the proper way to breath to maximize the assimilation of air and the circulation of a finer energy in the body through conscious effort: “I have to become one with the feeling of breathing, sensing the inhalation and the exhalation as natural and spontaneous, accepting everything so that there is no striving. When I succeed in letting the breathing take place more freely and completely, I feel that the energy fills my abdomen. In letting go more deeply, I feel that the breathing is the life of this energy in me. Its elements could nourish this inner Presence.” (78)

Most people do not breathe naturally; they breathe shallowly from the chest rather than from the diaphragm and do not exhale fully. By not breathing freely, the life-giving current of the breath is blocked and higher energies cannot be extracted from it: “It is a real event to let the breathing take place by itself, on its own. I participate in something larger. I am part of this experience which transforms me . . . [Normally] we do not see the action of the breath on the body, the radiation. In reality, this current puts the body in contact with all the levels of being. As I come to feel unity, I will experience a need to breathe more consciously.” (79) Jeanne de Salzmann identifies three stages of breathing which mirror the path of inner development, culminating in the final stage of conscious breathing:

In becoming conscious of the act of breathing, we will understand better the laws governing life and how serving them brings meaning to our existence. Real understanding of respiration comes through the experience of different stages. The first stage is to become conscious of the physical breathing and to let it be. The respiration goes on by itself. If it is tight and originates in the chest rather than the diaphragm, this shows that I am tense and confined to my ordinary “I.” I do not allow the breathing to come and go freely. I take in the air but do not allow complete exhalation, as though I were afraid of not receiving enough air. The first thing to learn is to let the breathing be without the intervention of my ordinary “I.” I have to let the breathing move lower in the body, and let the air go out entirely. The second stage of breathing is to exercise not only the body but oneself. I no longer place emphasis on exhaling completely, but instead let myself go with the exhalation. I relax not only my shoulders and chest, I relax the whole of myself. I see that my usual respiration reflects a false attitude on my “I.” It is not my body but “I” who is not breathing in the right way. In working, I discover that all my manifestations and mental attitudes block the flow of the breath. It is like a resistance to the fundamental rhythm of life, a fear of losing myself, a lack of trust in life. The third stage will be to experience that it is not I but “It,” the universal Being, which is breathing, and to see that breathing is a funda-

mental movement of a living whole. We learn to become conscious of life and of the Being incarnate in us, conscious of a rhythmic order in which we are included. (80)

Awareness of breathing was an important component of many of Gurdjieff's inner exercises. For instance, the "second assisting" exercise is based on dividing the attention into two or three separate parts in order to focus on certain inner and outer objects. The first step of the exercise is to consciously direct the attention to the process of breathing. Then the attention is focused on the head (brain) to observe any mental processes at play. At this point the second attention is directed to "remembering the whole of oneself," which helps the finer energies arising from the brain to flow into the solar plexus. This leads to the final stage, the culmination and ultimate aim of the exercise, described in *Life is Real Only Then, When "I Am"*: "Owing to my solar plexus intentionally and directly taking in the law-conformable results of the air I was breathing and the results arising in my head brain of the previously consciously perceived impressions, I feel much more fully that 'I am,' 'I can,' 'I can wish'." (81)

Gurdjieff also devised a number of breathing exercises associated with the sense of "I am." For example, when inhaling, students were instructed to say "I" and when exhaling say "am," and at the same time imagine transforming the air and letting it flow into the solar plexus. This could be done when standing or walking. But when sitting, he directed them to relax the legs and let the air flow into both legs. This exercise was to be done immediately after waking up in the morning.

The "Preparation" or "Collected" Exercise

The "Preparation" exercise (sometimes referred to as the "Collected" exercise) is considered the pillar or foundation of all inner work. The name of the exercise literally means a preparation for entering the stream of everyday life with a conscious presence.

There were a number of precursors to the Preparation exercise which combined physical and mental modalities, in order to achieve a certain motivation and conscious aim for those performing it (82). The exercise was designed to create the energy and will necessary to remember one's aim. The preliminary stages were similar to many of Gurdjieff's exercises: relaxation, preparation and collection. The psychological aspect incorporated in the exercise was an example of what he termed "active mentation," a state similar to pondering or contemplation.

Although an early version of the exercise was mentioned in 1941, it was not formally introduced to his students as a fully developed exercise until 1946. The recommended duration of the exercise, including the post-period of "digesting" the results, was roughly 20-40 minutes. The preliminary stages were very similar to many of his exercises: "You must do an exercise to be more collected. Choose a good moment that seems propitious. Sit down. Let nobody disturb you. Relax yourself. All your attention, all your will, are concentrated on your relaxation. You quiet your associations." (83)

Once a state of deep relaxation is obtained, the exercitant is instructed to become aware of the sensations of the body and ignore any thoughts and associations originating from the mind: “If you pay attention to the thoughts in your head, it takes you away from the awareness of the sensations in the body; but if you concentrate your attention on that awareness, you will take your attention away from the thoughts.” (84)

Following the exercise, before entry back into life, a period of “collected presence” was suggested to solidify the inner benefits accrued from the exercise. An abrupt return to everyday life “not only accelerated the dissipation of the collected state, but the beneficial effects of the entire preparation could be lost.” (85)

One of the practical purposes of the exercise is to establish a relaxed state each night before sleeping and again in the morning immediately after waking up. This creates a mutually-supporting cycle of preparing for each night and each morning to maximize the quality of life, whether sleeping or waking.

In the morning, one’s intention is to prepare for the day to come by making a mental program of the day’s expected activities. Gurdjieff: “Trust only this program you have decided on while in a special state. The main thing is to decide how you want to behave, what you want to do, the relationship you want to establish with each person; that is what a program is. And you believe only this.” (86)

Another important reason for consciously preparing for the upcoming events of the day is to be able to remember oneself at selected times during the day, i.e., choosing certain times during the day to come to an overall organic sensation of oneself. This practice was reinforced by Gurdjieff in talks with his students: “At each of the three hours, you must absolutely remember yourself. You enter into yourself; you feel that you exist with all your presence – this is your task.” (87) For this endeavour to be successful, it was important to prepare properly in the morning by entering into a quiet relaxed state.

The Preparation exercise has a number of important psychological aspects which must be utilized to produce a real and enduring change in oneself:

- A conscious effort of *will* is required as the affirmative force to overcome the denying force of inertia, procrastination and distraction.
- Unless there is some degree of control over one’s *attention* there is no possibility of becoming a master of one’s inner world.
- The ability to distinguish and become familiar with the different levels of *consciousness* within oneself is crucial for any higher spiritual development and realization.

The object of this exercise is manifold. It is first of all an exercise in attention, in controlling attention. It is an exercise in allowing the mind to come to rest. It is an exercise in becoming sensitive to the body, and this is important because where the body exhibits unnecessary tensions, these are normally connected with equally unnecessary tensions in other centers . . . If you continue to do these exercises, if you practice them, they will help you to maintain this

sense of yourself separate from your activities and functions. But in the end you need to come to something which you can hang onto as a kind of lifeline, if you remember to do so, in all sorts of situations. This is a feeling of one's physical presence, which one can come to feel whether one's current activity is a physical activity or an intellectual activity. Whatever it is, one can come to feel one's physical presence without this disturbing in any way the activity one is engaged in. This exercise is the beginning of quite a long series of steps which, if followed, can lead back to this sense of physical presence, which is something which most of us have lost. We have come to live more and more progressively in our heads and out of touch with our bodies most of the time. It is an exercise, as I say, in attention. It is an exercise in the silent witness, which is at a different level of consciousness than the ordinary activity of the centers. It is, at the same time, an exercise of will because there is resistance, there is difficulty, and so one cannot continue without exercising an embryonic amount of will. (88)

The exercise embodies four dimensions of self-study and work on oneself: relaxation, inner quiet, sensation of oneself and self-remembering. The exercise comprises a number of sequential stages (89) which the exercitant must follow:

1. Examine one's own state at the present moment.
2. Make a conscious wish to commit to "something more real in oneself."
3. Establish a correct posture.
4. Relax the body in a general way through a directed attention.
5. Relax specific parts of the body from head to toe.
6. After experiencing the sensations of the body, attain a state of total relaxation – relaxed body, quiet feelings and silent mind.
7. Become aware of one's feelings without verbal expression.
8. Become aware of the rhythm of breathing and consciously assimilate higher energies from the air.
9. Experience one's overall state and intone the words "I am."
10. Quietly experience the collected state before returning to everyday life.

When the practice of the exercise matures and fully develops, it becomes possible for the exercitant to enter a deep inner state of silence – a timeless presence or unadorned, pure experience of existence. Hugh Ripman: "If we can reach this silence, and the life of the silence in us, then we are at one of the gateways that lead from time to eternity, from space to emptiness, from activity taken as life to life itself." (90)

We are never without this silence; we are always within it, though we may not be aware of it because our attention is taken up with external and internal noise. It is only through contact with silence that we can gradually progress toward establishing and strengthening in us something that is permanent, something that is not at the mercy of every passing event – a subtle body which can survive the dissolution of the physical body . . . You have all touched this stillness, this living silence, at one time or another. And you know that it is something, when you experience it, that is unmoving and unchanging; so when you encounter it and part of you merges with it, you are not in time in the ordinary way. And here, when we participate

in this stillness – in it, there is no movement, no change, no succession. It is in this way not limited by time as we know it. It is also not limited at all by space as we know it, so that it has an element of the infinite and an element of the eternal . . . It is through this contact that we are connected with the very ground of our existence, with a source of strength and help within. (91)

NOTES

- (1) P.D. Ouspensky describes the rationale for studying so-called supernatural phenomena in *In Search of the Miraculous* (New York: Harcourt, 2001, p. 172):

G. explained to us that the study of these “tricks,” as he called them, was an obligatory subject in all Eastern schools, because without having studied all possible counterfeits and imitations it was not possible to begin the study of phenomena of a supernormal character. A man is in a position to distinguish the real from the sham in this sphere only when he knows all the shams and is able to reproduce them himself. Besides this G. said that a practical study of these “psychic tricks” was in itself an exercise which could be replaced by nothing else, which was the best of all for developing certain special characteristics: keenness of observation, shrewdness, and more particularly for the enlargement of other characteristics for which there are no words in ordinary psychological language but which must certainly be developed.
- (2) Jean Vaysse *Toward Awakening* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), pp. 167-168.
- (3) Joseph Azize *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 14-15.
- (4) Joseph Azize *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 303.
- (5) John Godolphin Bennett *Witness: The story of a Search* (New York: Dharma Book Company, 1962), p. 265.
- (6) Roger Lipsey *Gurdjieff Reconsidered: The Life, the Teachings, the Legacy* (Boulder: Shambhala, 2019), pp. 206-207.
- (7) Kathryn Hulme *Undiscovered Country: In Search of Gurdjieff* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1966), p. 112.
- (8) In the final category, Gurdjieff was referring to the struggle between mechanicalness (passive force) and consciousness (active force) which is at the heart of the Work. Overcoming the inertia of ego-based conditioning (automatism) requires a conscious effort (reconciling force) which the exercises facilitated. When body, feelings and mind are harmonized, the personality is under the direction of essence or ‘real I.’ Gurdjieff emphasized this point in a talk to his pupils in 1922 in *Views from the Real World: Early Talks of Gurdjieff* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1973, p. 171.):

It must be noted that we live most of all in the automaton. If we lived the whole time by centers alone they would not have enough energy. Therefore, this automatism is quite indispensable to us, although at the present moment it is our greatest enemy from which we have temporarily to free ourselves in order, first, to form a conscious body and mind. Later this automatism must be studied for the purpose of adapting it.

- (9) Keith Buzzell *A New Conception of God: Further Reflections on Gurdjieff's Whim* (Salt Lake City: Fifth Press, 2013), p. 118.
- (10) Joseph Azize *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 297.
- (11) Jean Vaysse *Toward Awakening* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), pp. 165-166.
- (12) Joseph Azize *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 304.
- (13) G.I. Gurdjieff *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1973), p. 569.
- (14) Roger Lipsey "Gurdjieff Observed" in Jacob Needleman and George Baker (eds.) *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching* (New York: Continuum, 1996), p. 344.
- (15) G.I. Gurdjieff *Gurdjieff's Early Talks 1914-1931* (London: Book Studio 2014), pp. 405-406.
- (16) Jeanne de Salzmann *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), p. 189.
- (17) Gurdjieff defined attention as the "proportionately blended results" of the actions of the intellectual, emotional and moving centers. Although attention is a unified whole, its components are the corresponding actions of these three independent centers. Many of Gurdjieff's exercises, and in particular the Movements, require the mobilization and continuity of a three-center attention.
- (18) Jeanne de Salzmann *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), pp. 196-197.
- (19) Kenneth Walker *Venture with Ideas* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1972), p. 157.
- (20) G.I. Gurdjieff *Gurdjieff's Early Talks 1914-1931* (London: Book Studio 2014), pp. 409-410.
- (21) G.I. Gurdjieff *Paris Meetings 1943* (Toronto: Dolmen Meadow Editions, 2017), p. 96.

- (22) Ravi Ravindra *Heart without Measure: Work with Madame de Salzmann* (Halifax: Shaila Press, 1999), p. 167.
- (23) G.I. Gurdjieff *Gurdjieff's Early Talks 1914-1931* (London: Book Studio 2014), p. 407.
- (24) Kathryn Hulme *Undiscovered Country: In Search of Gurdjieff* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1966), pp. 112-113.
- (25) G.I. Gurdjieff *Paris Meetings 1943* (Toronto: Dolmen Meadow Editions, 2017), p. 41.
- (26) G.I. Gurdjieff *Paris Meetings 1943* (Toronto: Dolmen Meadow Editions, 2017), p. 269.
- (27) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 232.
- (28) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 347.
- (29) Gurdjieff explained the reasons why a teacher and school are necessary in any attempt at a super-effort in *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 347:

“Schools are imperative,” he once said, “first of all because of the complexity of man’s organization. A man is unable *to keep watch* on the *whole of himself*, that is, all his different sides. Only a school can do this, school methods, school discipline – a man is much too lazy, he will do a great deal without the proper intensity, or he will do nothing at all while thinking that he is doing something; he will work with intensity on something that does not need intensity and will let those moments pass by when intensity is imperative. Then he spares himself; he is afraid of doing anything unpleasant. He will never attain the necessary intensity by himself. If you have observed yourself in a proper way you will agree with this. If a man sets himself a task of some sort he very quickly begins to be indulgent with himself. He tries to accomplish his task in the easiest way possible and so on. This is not work. In work only *super-efforts* are counted, that is, beyond the normal, beyond the necessary; ordinary efforts are not counted.”

- (30) G.I. Gurdjieff *Transcripts of Gurdjieff's Meetings 1941-1946* (London: Book Studio, 2009), p. 100.
- (31) Roger Lipsey *Gurdjieff Reconsidered: The Life, the Teachings, the Legacy* (Boulder: Shambhala, 2019), pp. 160-161.
- (32) G.I. Gurdjieff *Transcripts of Gurdjieff's Meetings 1941-1946* (London: Book Studio, 2009), p. 74.

(33) G.I. Gurdjieff *Transcripts of Gurdjieff's Meetings 1941-1946* (London: Book Studio, 2009), pp. 74-75.

(34) In *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010, p. 50), Jeanne de Salzmann provides more detailed specifics on the exact configuration of the body to help create a state of relaxation and allow a movement of energy from the higher centers:

My posture will be more stable if I am seated on the floor, on a cushion so that the knees are lower than the hips. One foot is placed, if possible, on the thigh or calf of the other leg. Crossing the legs checks the active impulse and allows the deepest level of quietude. The hands rest in the lap, with the favored hand supporting the other, with palms up and thumbs touching. I sit absolutely straight, with the ears and shoulders in a vertical line. The eyes are slightly open or may be closed. If unable to sit on the floor, I can use a stool or a chair provided I sit straight, with the knees lower than the hips. Maintaining the spine vertical frees pressure so that the upper part of the body feels no weight.

(35) Jeanne de Salzmann *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), p. 49.

(36) Jeanne de Salzmann *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), pp. 49-50.

(37) G.I. Gurdjieff *Gurdjieff's Early Talks 1914-1931* (London: Book Studio 2014), p. 413.

(38) G.I. Gurdjieff *Paris Meetings 1943* (Toronto: Dolmen Meadow Editions, 2017), p. 42.

(39) Gurdjieff made it very clear to his students that general methods such as physical movements, breathing exercises, meditation and concentration, diet and fasting were not helpful unless tailored and structured for each individual, not “all and sundry.”

(40) The Fourth Way is a path embedded in life itself and discourages the seeking of otherworldly ‘trance’ states. P.D. Ouspensky strongly believed that meditation and concentration practices imported from the East were incongruent with a balanced development. In *A Record of Meetings* (London: Arkana, 1992, p. 151.), he writes: “If you can self-remember you can meditate; if not, you cannot. It would be very good *if we could do it*. Self-remembering is the way towards this. You have to begin from the beginning like everything else.” And he considered trance states as unproductive and dangerous (*A Further Record* London: Arkana, 1986, p.127.):

Bringing oneself into a trance means creation of imagination in the higher emotional center. This is a blind alley. If you get there you cannot get out and cannot go any further. The idea is to control imagination. If, instead of that, by certain methods, you transform it into imagination in the higher emotional center, you get bliss, happiness, but it is, after all, only *sleep on a higher level*.

And Madame Ouspensky was even more adamant, stating that sitting meditation was useless: “You meditate, stare at wall. Soon you see things – angels, devils, anything. All imagination. Must work.” (Robert de Ropp *Warrior’s Way* Nevada City, California: Gateways 1992, p. 100.)

- (41) Jeanne de Salzmann *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), p. 85.
- (42) C.S. Nott *Teachings of Gurdjieff* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974), p. 6.
- (43) C.S. Nott *Teachings of Gurdjieff* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974), p. 5.
- (44) Kathryn Hulme *Undiscovered Country: In Search of Gurdjieff* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1966), pp. 93-94.
- (45) Fritz Peters *Boyhood with Gurdjieff* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 168.
- (46) C.S. Nott *Journey Through This World* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974), p. 186.
- (47) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 354.
- (48) Joseph Azize *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 106.
- (49) G.I. Gurdjieff *Meetings With Remarkable Men* (London: Penguin, 2002), pp. 187-189.
- (50) G.I. Gurdjieff *Meetings With Remarkable Men* (London: Penguin, 2002), pp. 189-190.
- (51) Roger Lipsey *Gurdjieff Reconsidered: The life, the Teachings, the Legacy* (Boulder: Shambhala, 2019), pp. 159-160.
- (52) William Patrick Patterson *Voices in the Dark* (Fairfax, California: Arete Communications, 2001), p. 26.
- (53) Kenneth Walker *The Making of Man* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 94.
- (54) Jean Vaysse *Toward Awakening* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 167.
- (55) Jean Vaysse *Toward Awakening* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 161.
- (56) G.I. Gurdjieff *Transcripts of Gurdjieff’s Meetings 1941-1946* (London: Book Studio, 2009), p. 140.

- (57) G.I. Gurdjieff *Paris Meetings 1943* (Toronto: Dolmen Meadow Editions, 2017), p. 44.
- (58) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 358.
- (59) Thomas and Olga de Hartmann *Our Life with Mr. Gurdjieff* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), pp. 202-203.
- (60) Gurdjieff's advice regarding fasting, and his instructions to his pupils regarding their own fast, is recorded in *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 358:
- “These substances consist of very strong solutions,” he said, “And if they are left without attention they will poison the organism. They must be used up. But how can they be used up if the organism gets no food? Only by an increase of work, an increase of perspiration. People make a tremendous mistake when they try to ‘save their strength,’ make fewer movements, and so on, when fasting. On the contrary, it is necessary to expend as much energy as possible. Then fasting can be beneficial. And when we began our fast we were not left in peace for a single second. G. made us run in the heat, doing a round of two miles, or stand with extended arms, or mark time at the double, or carry out a whole series of curious gymnastic exercises which he showed us.
- (61) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), pp. 350-351.
- (62) Hugh Brockwill Ripman *Questions and Answers Along the Way* (Washington, D.C.: Forthway Center Press, 2009), p. 74.
- (63) G.I. Gurdjieff *Views from the Real World: Early Talks of Gurdjieff* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1973), p. 163.
- (64) G.I. Gurdjieff *Views from the Real World: Early Talks of Gurdjieff* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1973), p. 161.
- (65) Joseph Azize *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 190.
- (66) G.I. Gurdjieff *Transcripts of Gurdjieff's Meetings 1941-1946* (London: Book Studio, 2009), p. 69.
- (67) G.I. Gurdjieff *Transcripts of Gurdjieff's Meetings 1941-1946* (London: Book Studio, 2009), p. 67.
- (68) Jean Vaysse *Toward Awakening* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 162.

(69) Similar exercises of moving the attention to specific areas of the body can be found in a number of other spiritual teachings and traditions:

- Stephen Levine “A Guided Meditation on Energy in the Body” in *A Gradual Awakening* (New York: Anchor Press, 1979, pp. 118-121.
- Eckhart Tolle “Going Deeply Into the Body” in *The Power of Now* (Vancouver: Namaste Publishing, 2003, pp. 109-111.
- Eckhart Tolle “Inner Body Awareness” in *A New Earth* (New York: Dutton, 2005, pp. 248-249.
- Pema Chödrön “Body Scan” in *How to Meditate* (Boulder: Sounds True, 2018, pp. 26-28.

(70) Students of ‘the Rope’ were given a sensory exercise using a chaplet as an aid and the focal point of attention. A chaplet is a form of Christian prayer which uses counting beads similar to a rosary. Running the beads through the fingers requires a consciousness of sensation and keeps the attention firmly focused. Kathryn Hulme describes her experience of the exercise in *Undiscovered Country: In Search of Gurdjieff* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1966), pp. 93-94:

One day Gurdjieff gave to each one of us on the Rope a chaplet made of large black beads of some curious substance, upon which we were to do a special sensing exercise as we passed the beads through thumb and index finger. He told us how in the old times such chaplets were known as the Inanimate Helper and that many kinds of inner world work, far more difficult than our current exercises, were done with their aid. “You see men – Turk, Greek, Armenian, Arab – sitting all day in the coffee house with such chaplets. To you they make a picture of the lazy man, but what they do with these beads creates an inner force you cannot imagine. Even some special holy men, initiate of course, could move mountains if they wished, just sitting still, working with their chaplets, seeming half asleep.” He advised us to carry the chaplets with us everywhere, but not to make spectacles of ourselves doing the exercise visibly in public. “Carry in your pockets,” he counseled. “Such exercises as I have given, you can do anywhere in life – while sitting in a café, theatre, on a bus . . . but do not let people see you do it. They do not understand.” So now we were doing the Work in the outside world, wherever we went, missing no opportunity to find those beads hidden in purse or pocket, as if every minute counted. “Why waste our dear Time?” Gurdjieff once said.

(71) G.I. Gurdjieff *Paris Meetings 1943* (Toronto: Dolmen Meadow Editions, 2017), pp. 179-180.

(72) G.I. Gurdjieff *Life is Real Only Then, When “I Am”* (New York: Triangle Editions, 1975), p. 131.

(73) G.I. Gurdjieff *Life is Real Only Then, When “I Am”* (New York: Triangle Editions, 1975), p. 113.

- (74) G.I. Gurdjieff *Transcripts of Gurdjieff's Meetings 1941-1946* (London: Book Studio, 2009), p. 141.
- (75) G.I. Gurdjieff *Transcripts of Gurdjieff's Meetings 1941-1946* (London: Book Studio, 2009), p. 141.
- (76) Jeanne de Salzmann *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), p. 236.
- (77) Jeanne de Salzmann *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), p. 149.
- (78) Jeanne de Salzmann *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), pp. 148-149.
- (79) Jeanne de Salzmann *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), pp. 146.
- (80) Jeanne de Salzmann *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), pp. 146-147.
- (81) G.I. Gurdjieff *Life is Real Only Then, When "I Am"* (New York: Triangle Editions, 1975), p. 142.
- (82) Joseph Azize reports a transcript, authenticated by Jeanne de Salzmann and Olga de Hartmann, of a meeting in New York in 1930 which describes the exercise (Joseph Azize *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises* New York: Oxford University Press, 2020, pp. 172-173.):
1. *To gain energy, Mr. Gurdjieff gave an exercise for those who are able already to often automatically remember their aim, but have no strength to do it.*
 2. Sit for a period of at least one hour alone.
 3. Make all muscles relaxed.
 4. Allow associations to proceed but do not be absorbed by them. Say to them: "If you will let me do my business now, I will later grant your wishes." Look at associations as another being to keep from identifying yourself with them.
 5. At the end of an hour take a piece of paper and write your aim on it. Make this paper your God. Everything else is nothing.
 6. Take from your pocket and read it constantly every day. In this way, it becomes a part of you. At first theoretically, later actually.
 7. To gain energy, practice this exercise of sitting still and making your muscles dead. Only when everything in you is quiet for an hour then make your decision about your aim. Don't let associations absorb you.
- (83) Hugh Brockwill Ripman *Questions and Answers Along the Way* (Washington, D.C.: Forthway Center Press, 2009), p. 67.
- (84) Hugh Brockwill Ripman *Questions and Answers Along the Way* (Washington, D.C.: Forthway Center Press, 2009), p. 68.
- (85) Joseph Azize *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 287.

- (86) G.I. Gurdjieff *Paris Meetings 1943* (Toronto: Dolmen Meadow Editions, 2017), pp. 317-318.
- (87) G.I. Gurdjieff *Transcripts of Gurdjieff's Meetings 1941-1946* (London: Book Studio, 2009), p. 147.
- (88) Hugh Brockwill Ripman *Questions and Answers Along the Way* (Washington, D.C.: Forthway Center Press, 2009), pp. 75-76.
- (89) A more detailed description of the Preparation exercise, with added commentary, is provided in a number of sources:
- Jean Vaysse *Toward Awakening* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), pp. 157-167.
 - Hugh Brockwill Ripman *Questions and Answers Along the Way* (Washington, D.C.: Forthway Center Press, 2009), pp. 67-91.
 - Joseph Azize *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 273-287.
- (90) Hugh Brockwill Ripman *Questions and Answers Along the Way* (Washington, D.C.: Forthway Center Press, 2009), p. 88.
- (91) Hugh Brockwill Ripman *Questions and Answers Along the Way* (Washington, D.C.: Forthway Center Press, 2009), pp. 89-90.