

INNER WORK EXERCISES II

The Movements

The Movements were first taught by Gurdjieff to a select group of students in St. Petersburg in 1916 and, a few years later, in Tiflis and Constantinople. During this period they were referred to as sacred gymnastics or sacred dances. They became a significant feature of the Work in the early 1920s at the Prieuré in France. Following Gurdjieff's automobile accident in 1924 they were abandoned, but were resumed in 1928 as an integral part of the teaching. During the 1940s they were a prominent component of the inner work provided to his pupils. It was a time of intense creativity for Gurdjieff as he developed many new Movements which inspired his students, many of whom have shared their experiences learning and performing them during this period.

The impetus for the Movements lies in the religious ceremonies and sacred dances that Gurdjieff witnessed in the various temples and monasteries of Turkestan, Afghanistan, Tibet, Kafiristan, Chitral and other places he visited during his extensive travels in the East. A.R. Orage described the nature and significance of these sacred dances at a public demonstration of the Movements in New York in 1924:

Sacred dances and posture and movements in series have always been one of the vital subjects taught in esoteric schools in the East. They have a double aim: to convey a certain kind of knowledge, and to be a means for acquiring a harmonious state of being. The farthest limits of one's endurance are reached through the combination of non-natural and non-habitual movements, and by performing them a new quality of sensing is obtained, a new quality of concentration and attention and a new direction of the mind – all for a certain definite aim. In ancient times the dance was a branch of real art, and served the purpose of higher knowledge and religion . . . The ancient sacred dance is not only a medium for an aesthetic experience, but a book, as it were, or script, containing a definite piece of knowledge. But it is a book which not everyone can read. A detailed study of sacred dances and special movements and postures over many years has proved their importance in the work of the harmonious development of man; the parallel development of all his powers – one of the principal aims of Mr. Gurdjieff. (1)

Gurdjieff indicated that sacred dances and the Movements were not only methods of self-development, but also a medium which encapsulates certain cosmic laws (2) which govern the evolution of human consciousness. They are very precise instruments which express the reality of a higher level of being in harmony with universal laws of development: "Mr. Gurdjieff, during a long life devoted to study and questioning, mastered the principles of those sacred dances which constitute a branch of objective art. Understanding the principles, he was able to demonstrate truths through these movements. The student, even from the beginning, through the high degree of sustained attention required to perfect himself in the movements, is using one of the specific means of self-knowledge, and of obtaining 'the cognition and comprehension of reality'." (3)

Sacred dances and movements have always played an important part in the work of real schools. They express an unknown dimension and reveal what is hidden from the average man – the reality of a higher level of being. If we are able to pass from our ordinary level to a higher, it means that something in us is changed. The changes are governed by definite cosmic laws, and a knowledge of these laws exists and can be discovered. Gurdjieff in his early travels witnessed and took part in various ritual dances and ceremonies; and he realized that they could be used as a language to express knowledge of a higher order – cosmic knowledge. This language is mathematical, according to exact measure. Every movement has its appointed place, its duration and weight. The combinations and sequences are mathematically calculated. Postures and attitudes are arranged to produce definite, predetermined emotions . . . In creating these movements each detail has a meaning, the smallest element is taken into account; nothing is left to chance or to imagination. There is only one possible gesture, posture and rhythm with which to represent a given human or cosmic situation. (4)

The Movements play a crucial role in Gurdjieff’s path of conscious development and “are integral to the teaching and represent one of Gurdjieff’s unique offerings to Western men and women in search of themselves.” (5) The corpus of Movements, when viewed from a comprehensive perspective, form an organic whole in which each exercise is related to the others in a matrix of permutations, much like the spokes of a wheel.

French pupil Pauline de Dampierre, one of the principal teachers of the Movements following Gurdjieff’s death, points to the commonality of purpose they all embody: “The work of Movements is part of a teaching, every aspect of which is oriented toward the development of consciousness. Engaging in these exercises the individual begins to feel that he is trying to contact deeper energies in himself which, until then, were completely unknown to him.” (6)

The work of Movements provides special conditions that enable us to understand, through experience, certain aspects of the teaching that would otherwise not be so accessible. The first aspect has to do with the role of the body. At certain moments, they reveal to him the astonishing resources that his body can bring to the inner search when it is called upon in the right way. At other moments they show him to what degree the body becomes an obstacle through its tensions and inertia. Another aspect has to do with the importance of effort in the Work. The Movements show us the profound effect that efforts can have when they are made under conditions created on the basis of precise knowledge. When seemingly insurmountable difficulties are overcome, the inner state of being changes. Fatigue and other obstacles vanish. Then one could say that the effort itself has had a truly transformative power . . . then there is a third aspect having to do with aim. Theoretically, this may appear obvious, but in practice it is not so obvious. One has to realize that the quality of what is experienced depends, above all, on the quality of one’s aim. If the aim is merely the pleasure of being in movement, of following the music, of being able to respond to the demand, a certain threshold cannot be crossed. The movement only has meaning when it is accomplished by that inner collectedness which Gurdjieff called a state of presence. (7)

Each movement is a choreographed sequence of postures, rhythms, hand, arm and leg positions, (and may also include spoken words), carried out simultaneously and following a specific order. They are typically practised in a group setting with pupils arranged in rows, usually accompanied by the music composed by Gurdjieff and Thomas de Hartmann, or improvised on the spot.

Solange Claustres studied with Gurdjieff and was a long-time teacher of the Movements at the Gurdjieff Institute in Paris. She reflects on the challenges of learning and mastering the Movements (8) in her memoir *Becoming Conscious with G.I. Gurdjieff*: “The complexity of these movements, the notion of presence in oneself, the motor coordinations needed for their correct performance, demanded simultaneous representation and memory of all this. Through the precision demanded by Gurdjieff’s Movements, more complete and finer connections are created between body, thought and feeling. In these special conditions, as the Movements themselves unfold, the inner state: thought, emotion, perception, sensation and their interrelationships became transformed.” (9)

The practice of the Movements is an essential Work method and a pathway for self-study and self-awareness. They also facilitate self-observation and self-sensing, and clearly demonstrate the lack of relationship between body, mind and feelings in most human beings. Solange Claustres: “In the Movements, an aspect of the work on oneself is to be conscious of our tensions, which little by little, reveal to us the link existing between a physical tension and an emotion, or a thought, or a habit, on which we are dependent, and over which we have no control, since these connections are created without our knowledge, unconsciously.” (10)

The Movements offer an opportunity for self-discovery in the framework of a school and under the guidance of qualified instructors (11). They reveal aspects of ourselves that reflect the conditioned physical, emotional and mental habits that prevent awakening. Marthe de Gaigneron, one of the principal instructors of the Movements, highlights the transformative effect of the exercises: “It is precisely in terms of an opening to the sacred that one must understand the dances brought to us by G.I. Gurdjieff. This opening can free us from our mechanicalness, while revealing the ‘essential’ aspect of our nature. The Movements call to ‘the whole of our being,’ through many different means; this explains their amazing diversity. They exercise more specifically one function or another and often rely on tempos totally different from those experienced in daily life.” (12)

In order to follow this way, one must submit totally to the work of the “school,” become a pupil among others, a mere member in a row but with the extraordinary support of a common search. The Movements are experienced in a kind of microcosm. While meticulously following the teacher’s instructions, each participant feels responsible for themselves and for the environment in which they move. Whether composed or improvised, the music also plays a very important part in the experience; it has an intimate relationship with the inner meaning of the Movements, giving support to their rhythm and expression. Together with the musicians playing, it becomes part of a general alchemy. (13)

The Movements require a very high level of attention and reveal how little control we have over our attention. Students have remarked how challenging and difficult it is to master even the most elementary movements. (14) The requirement of a sustained attention is always a hurdle as pupils strive to perfect even the most basic movement. In *The Practice of Presence*, Patty de Llosa describes her uneven efforts:

These dances and exercises demanded a total commitment of attention from the performer, far beyond our usual capacity for concentration. The first dilemma I met with in each new exercise was how to remember the unusual rhythms, the sophisticated combinations of foot, leg, arm, head and torso positions and displacements and the order in which they came . . . To add to the complexity, the positions of one part of the body often came on different counts from those of another, or appeared at unusual places in the rhythm, usually maintained by the feet. To catch them on the fly and bring one's body into action, making the right movements at the right time, demanded complete attentiveness. But a clear head, though essential to keep order and direct oneself into the necessary positions, wasn't enough. The struggle to move swiftly and accurately from one pose to the next also called for an immediate receptivity in the body. So on the one hand, I had to remember the various rhythms and positions, and on the other, I had to be available to move instantly, trusting the body's experience to know what came next. (15)

The complexity and technical detail in performing the movements was often overwhelming for the practitioner: "I couldn't remember simple sequences or piece together parts of gestures. I mixed gestures from one movement into another, my mind did not connect with my body, and I had no continuity of attention." (16) In order to be properly executed, each movement demands focus, discipline, precision, and sustained attention.

These exercises naturally do not all have the same impact nor the same intensity. Nevertheless, each one carries a specific meaning in its form and aim, in its complexity as well as its simplicity. All of this demands absolute precision of movement, from the palm of the hands to the slightest position of the feet, requiring a dynamic balance of *the whole*, in order to support a search which can only be understood through direct experience. When one starts, what is most striking in this discipline is a simultaneous sense of constraint and freedom. One discovers new life in a body which has been, until then, limited by its education, by its acquired physical, mental, or other habits and which, when free, opens us to a world of unknown impressions and experiences. Attention related to the body is constantly demanded. A merciless confrontation with these exercises and dances, and above all with one's incapacity to "conform to the model," often provokes a real shock. (17)

The Movements are usually offered after a period of preliminary work when the basic principles of the teaching have been studied and assimilated. The foundation of the Movements are the six 'obligatory' exercises which are taught before a student attempts more advanced and complicated movements. Gurdjieff once said that his entire teaching was embodied in the first exercise of the obligatories. (18)

One of the primary functions of the Movements is inner development through the harmonization of the intellectual, emotional and moving centers. “They express and contain a certain knowledge and, at the same time, they serve as a method of obtaining a harmonious state of being. Combinations of these movements express different sensations, produce varying degrees of concentration of thought, create necessary efforts in different functions and show the possible limits of individual force.” (19) John G. Bennett, in *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, places the Movements in the context of trans-forming the thinking, feeling and moving functions as a necessary stage of actualizing higher developmental possibilities:

The body for Gurdjieff is not simply the physical organism, but this organism endowed with its three brains or three modes of perception. The three brains participate in everything that we do without co-ordination or harmony. One undoubted value of working at the movements is to bring about an awakening of the latent powers of the centres and to harmonize their working . . . One of the first requirements for the attainment of the harmonious state of being is to achieve a proper balance between the three functions. Generally speaking, in Western man, feeling and organic sensation are not only undeveloped, but they play an unnatural and even harmful part in man’s life. It is through the distortion of our feelings that we are subject to negative emotions and through distortion of our organic sensations that our bodily sensations are constantly interfering with the free working of our consciousness. Through selected movements, used in the right sequence and with the right understanding of the purpose, many defects – both physical and emotional – can be corrected and the pupil thereby brought to a more balanced and normal state. (20)

With persistent practice over time, the quality of attention deepens and the movements become freer and effortless. The three centers become integrated and new vistas of a more refined awareness appear in consciousness: “As time goes on, the movements bring to life in us parts that have previously existed beyond our ordinary perception. A new world, bathed in the strange sense of inner presence evoked by the exercises, replaces the fog in which our usual mental activities exist and this can bring with it a transcendental emotion.” (21) Henri Thomasson’s personal experience of twenty years in the Work confirms the effects of the Movements over time:

If a certain amount of inner attention can be maintained, energy flows through the body as it should, using the natural channels which exist for this purpose. This brings a feeling of inner clarity and movements can be made with a sense of ease and freedom, built up partly by the speed of the movements themselves, which seems at times to be beyond the limits of what is possible for the body, and partly by the opening up of inner contacts which come from the changed flow of energy. Disconnection from interference from the head allows a new freedom of thought and a better control of gesture and helps to keep attention on oneself. The different quality of physical activity which then becomes possible leads in turn to a more positive functioning of the emotions. For a moment, three centres are experienced as working together on a level that is felt to be the same for them all. This experience makes it possible to be in contact with the specific energy of each centre and to be aware of the mental and physical habits of every kind that are the basis of all inward and outward activity. (22)

The importance of the Movements extends beyond these psychological and physiological attributes to encompass the realm of human self-realization. They have been described as a “skillful means” to a more awakened and stable consciousness, leading to liberation from automatism, inner freedom, a new sense of oneself, and an intimation of the sacred dimensions of life. Professor of philosophy Jacob Needleman: “The Gurdjieff Movements are based on the view that a series of specific postures, gestures, and movements supported by an intentional use of melody and rhythm and an essential element of right individual effort, can help to evoke an inner condition which is closer to a more conscious existence, or a state of unity, which can allow one an opening to the conscious energy of the Self.” (23)

There are also a number of positive secondary effects associated with the Movements:

- A stable grounding in physical reality
- Conscious movement and fluidity
- Enhanced concentration and attention
- Will, focus, persistence
- Patience and composure under stress
- Awareness of conditioned physical, emotional and intellectual habits
- Collaboration and attunement with others
- Receptivity to higher energies and forces

The Movements are multiple in their action as they influence the body, emotions and mind simultaneously: “They awaken us to our habitual patterns of thinking, feeling and moving. By taking unaccustomed postures in unusual and sometimes conflicting rhythms we are called to engage all three of our centers at once. A deeper level of conscious attention appears. According to Gurdjieff, only new postures and unaccustomed rhythms can shake us out of our fixed repertory of intellectual and emotional attitudes, and awaken us to new impressions of who we are.” (24)

The movements are extremely multifaceted. Typically, multiple movements and rhythms are done simultaneously, requiring a level of attention that does not permit daydreaming and calls for a non-habitual sense of presence. Yet the whole forms a pattern that is harmonious, reflecting the nested rhythms that prevail in all temporal organizations, from music to brain waves. At the same time, the different postures evoke different emotional states, in a logical succession . . . By requiring a quality of attention maintained on several parts at the same time, they help us to get out of the narrow circle of our automatism. And through a strict succession of attitudes, they lead us to a new possibility of thinking, feeling and action. (25)

Students have described their own experience of a harmonious flow of being during the Movements. In *Record of a Search*, Ricardo Guillon writes: “I was deeply touched and completely engaged by these Movements. They challenged my attention and made me feel alive and present. As I worked, I felt brought to the present moment by very

concrete elements: my body in motion, my mind alert, my attention engaged – a subtle feeling of positive surprise.” (26)

Other students have spoken of their own experience of the Movements as a path to inner growth and a gateway to a higher state of consciousness and being. (27) Pauline de Dampierre regarded the Movements as a bequest to humanity and an instrument of conscious evolution for anyone on the path of self-realization:

There are exceptionally rare, elevating moments of truth that leave you with a very strong impression and perhaps, a sense of longing as well. At the same time, this search has a very wide range of possibilities. Children, adults, and older people can all participate. The exercises are adapted to the abilities of everyone. Everyone can study how the body, animated by these Movements and supported by the rhythm and the music, can take its place in the work on oneself. So the riches of the search are open to all. (28)

When seen from a larger perspective, the Movements are much more than simple rhythmic exercises – they embody a vehicle for conscious inner development and awakening. Marthe de Gaigneron: “This discipline allows us to experience through the body in movement all of our functional mechanisms. Above all, it can awaken latent capacities belonging to an unknown side of our nature . . . These Movements have as their aim the rediscovery of a *presence of being* through the re-equilibrium of the body and a new ordering of its functions; this is the first step toward an awareness of oneself in the heart of daily life.” (29)

The “Stop” Exercise

In January 1924, Gurdjieff and his pupils gave a public performance of sacred dances and Movements. Included in the lengthy program was one particularly unexpected and startling “work of theatre” – the “Stop” exercise. (30) C.S Nott, who later became a student of Gurdjieff, was in the audience and recounts what transpired on the stage:

Gurdjieff came onto the stage, and I was able to observe him closely. He was wearing a dark lounge suit and black trilby hat: a very powerful man physically, yet as light on his feet as a tiger. He looked at the audience with a half-smile, and took us all in with a glance of his piercing dark eyes. The pupils having gathered at one side of the stage, Gurdjieff threw something into the air, and the pupils ran to catch it. He shouted ‘Stop!’ As if by magic the group froze like statues in various attitudes. A minute or so passed. ‘*Davolna,*’ [continue] said Gurdjieff, and everyone relaxed and walked off. (31)

Nott had witnessed one of Gurdjieff’s most controversial exercises, but also one of the least understood. Journalists and theatre critics were quick to condemn the event as evidence of a “hypnotic spell” cast by Gurdjieff on his sheeplike students. They were unable to understand that what they had viewed was an inner exercise administered by a master to his willing students in order to enable them to observe themselves and learn.

The “Stop” exercise was first introduced to Gurdjieff’s groups in Essentuki in 1917. It was an important feature of the public demonstrations of sacred dances and Movements performed in Paris in late 1923 and America in 1924, where it was received with surprise and bewilderment by both audience and the press. In the 1940s it played an unexpected role in one of the Movements choreographed by Gurdjieff as part of a longer series of 39 new Movements. Following Gurdjieff’s death in 1949 it largely ceased to be a part of the repertoire of exercises carried out by the various Gurdjieff Foundations.

John G. Bennett, who was a pupil at the Prieuré in 1923, provides a description of the “Stop” exercise from the perspective of a participant:

Sometimes Gurdjieff used his famous Stop Exercise. At any moment of the day or night, he might shout: “Stop!” when everyone within hearing had to arrest all movement. First the eyes were to fix upon the object of their gaze. The body was to remain motionless in the exact posture of the moment the word ‘stop’ was heard, and the thought present in the mind was to be held. The Stop might last a few seconds, or five, ten minutes or more. The posture might be painful or even dangerous; but, if we were sincere and conscientious, we would do nothing to ease it. We had to wait until Gurdjieff shouted “Continue!” and then resume what we had been doing before. (32)

The exercise consists of a number of specific actions which must be followed exactly in order for benefit to the students to accrue. Gurdjieff emphasized that only a qualified teacher could give the ‘stop’ command. (33) The proper carrying out of these detailed instructions requires the mobilization of a directed attention and the engagement of a purposeful will:

1. The command ‘*stop*’ may be given anywhere and at any time. Pupils must halt all movement instantly regardless of their particular situation or circumstance. Whether working, resting, walking or eating they must instantly stop and remain absolutely still, preserving their posture at the exact moment the command was given.
2. The facial expression and gaze must remain fixed. The eyes must stay focused on the exact spot they were looking at the moment of the command.
3. The flow of thoughts must be arrested and no new thoughts allowed to enter awareness.
4. All the attention must be concentrated on the tension of the various parts of the body, and the tensions must be continually observed at all times.
5. Students must remain in an overall position and state of non-movement, while ensuring that muscular tension does not increase or decrease.
6. If someone drops from fatigue and cannot preserve the original posture any longer, they should “fall like a sack” without protecting themselves from a blow. Similarly, if they are holding an object in their hands, they must hold it as long as possible before the object falls of itself.
7. Only when an agreed-upon signal is given by the teacher can the students resume a normal posture or movement.

The theoretical underpinning of the “Stop” exercise is the automatism of the moving center and its relationship with the emotional and intellectual centers. Gurdjieff: “The posture of your body corresponds with your feelings and your thoughts. A change in your feelings will produce a corresponding change in your mental attitude, and in your physical posture. So that if we wish to change our habits of feeling and our habitual forms of thinking, we must first change our habits of posture. But in ordinary life it is impossible for us to acquire new physical postures; the automatism of our centers would prevent it.” (34)

The basic premise of the exercise is that every person has a limited number of postures associated with the intellectual, emotional and moving centers, and their postures are all interconnected. In *Views from the Real World*, Gurdjieff writes: “Generally we pass from one posture to another so rapidly that we do not notice the attitudes we take in passing. The “Stop” exercise gives the possibility of seeing and feeling our own body in postures and attitudes which are entirely unaccustomed and unnatural to it.” (35)

Psychological analysis and the study of the psychomotor functions, applied in a certain manner, demonstrate that each of our movements, voluntary or involuntary, is an unconscious transition from one automatically fixed posture to another, equally automatic. It is an illusion that our movements are voluntary; in reality they are automatic. Our thoughts and feelings are equally automatic. And the automatism of our thoughts and our feelings is definitely connected with the automatism of our movements. One cannot be changed without the other . . . We do not recognize to what extent the intellectual, emotional and moving functions are mutually dependent, although, at the same time, we can be aware of how much our moods and emotional states depend on our movements and postures . . . Since all our functions – intellectual, emotional and moving – possess their own definite repertory of postures and are in constant reciprocal action, it follows that we can never depart from our own repertory. (36)

The number, type and style of physical postures differ by race, nationality, social class and even profession. (37) In every culture and historical period postures and movements are associated with particular forms of thought and feeling. It is very hard to change the form of thought or feeling without altering postures and movements. “To each position of the body corresponds a certain inner state and, on the other hand, to each inner state corresponds a certain posture. A person, in their life, has a certain number of habitual postures and passes from one to another without stopping at those between.” (38)

Taking new, unaccustomed postures enables you to observe yourself inside differently from the way you usually do in ordinary conditions. This becomes especially clear when on the command “Stop!” you have to freeze at once. At this command you have to freeze not only externally but also to stop all your inner movements. Muscles that were tense must remain in the same state of tension, and the muscles that were relaxed must remain relaxed. You must make the effort to keep thoughts and feelings as they were, and at the same time to observe yourself. (39)

The avowed developmental purpose of the “Stop” exercise is to show each student the complete mechanicalness of their functioning by freezing their posture and movement at a moment in time to enable the observation of their automatism:

The movement that has begun is broken off at the sudden command or signal. The body becomes motionless and fixed in mid-passage from one posture to another, in an attitude in which it never stops in ordinary life. By perceiving himself in this state of an unaccustomed posture, a man looks at himself from new points of view, sees and observes himself anew . . . In this manner, the circle of the old automatism is broken. The body vainly struggles to take the habitual posture comfortable for it. The will of the man, brought into action by the order “stop,” prevents this. The “stop” exercise is simultaneously an exercise for the will, for the attention, for thought, for feeling and for movements. (40)

Essentially the “Stop” exercise is a practice for self-remembering, using postures and movements as the object of sustained observation and attention. The guiding principle of the exercise is to create conditions so that mechanical movements from one posture to another can be captured in transition. By feeling oneself in an unaccustomed posture, a student observes themselves from new points of view. It is central to inner work and affords the student the possibility of escaping from the prison of automatism that characterizes everyday life. The exercise is a challenge for the student to remember themselves in a situation unlike any they meet in daily life:

A man must remember himself so as not to miss the signal; he must remember himself so as not to take the most comfortable posture at the first moment; he must remember himself in order to watch the tensions of the muscles in different parts of the body, the direction in which he is looking, the facial expression, and so on; he must remember himself in order to overcome very considerable pain sometimes from unaccustomed positions of the legs, arm, and back, so as not to be afraid of falling or dropping something heavy on his foot. It is enough to forget oneself for a single moment and the body will adopt, by itself and almost unnoticed, a more comfortable position, it will transfer weight from one foot to another, will slacken certain muscles, and so on. The “Stop” exercise is simultaneously an exercise for the will, the attention, the thoughts, the feelings, and for the moving center. (41)

Mental and Psychological Exercises

The inner exercises that Gurdjieff assigned his students involved all aspects of human functioning and experience: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. In many cases the exercises combined more than one modality to create a holistic influence that reached the core of each student’s true individuality or ‘real I.’

The mental and psychological exercises were primarily intended for work with the intellectual and emotional centers; the more spiritual exercises were for the higher centers.

Some of the psychological exercises were designed to consciously cultivate pupils' mental resources by increasing the acuity, scope and flexibility of the mind. (42) At the Prieuré, students were assigned a variety of mental tasks including memorizing Tibetan words, the Morse code and even Gurdjieff's unique script which adorned the Study House in the grounds. Tcheslaw Tchekhovitch provides a description of some of the exercises in *Gurdjieff: A Master in Life*:

In the morning, after breakfast, we would head off to the work we had been assigned. Every day we were given an inner exercise whose aim was to help us reach a higher level of consciousness. These exercises called for a more balanced relationship among the three principal functions: physical, emotional, and intellectual. The exercises were constantly changed, coming from a seemingly infinite repertoire, and they could be very complex. One time we were asked to carry out arithmetic operations while using, in the place of numbers, sixteen feminine names. Instead of saying that 16 minus 12 equals 4, for example, we had to say Nina minus Adèle equals Marie. The feminine names could just as well be replaced by colours, opera titles, various objects, gestures, or whatever. It was interesting to see that time could seem very long when our efforts remained mechanical or very short when our attention and presence became free. Generally speaking, we were severely put to the test, but the reward was worth the effort. All these mental gymnastics fostered a high level of concentration, the end result being the liberation of an independent attention, no longer subject to what Mr. Gurdjieff called 'associative mechanisms.' (43)

Psychological exercises were an early feature of Gurdjieff's inner work. In the Russian phase of his teaching, he gave the members of his Moscow group a very unique but challenging exercise: telling the story of their life. Gurdjieff:

In order to know one's own type one must make a good study of one's life, one's whole life from the very beginning; one must know how, and why, things have happened. I want to give you all a task. It will be a general and an individual task at one and the same time. Let every one of you in the group tell about his life. Everything must be told in detail without embellishment, and without suppressing anything. Emphasize the principal and essential things without dwelling on trifles or details. You must be sincere and not be afraid that others will take anything in a wrong way, because everyone is in the same position; everyone must strip himself; everyone must show himself as he is. This task will once more show you why nothing must be taken outside the groups. Nobody would dare to speak if he thought or suspected that what he said in the group would be repeated outside. (44)

However, the task of "telling one's life" proved to be much more difficult than it first appeared. P.D. Ouspensky describes his futile attempts at conveying to others his own life story: "Almost immediately I felt a certainty that there were many things that I had no intention whatever of telling. Something in me registered such a vehement protest against [the task] that I did not even attempt to struggle and in speaking of certain periods in my life I tried to give only the general idea and the significance of the facts which I did not want to relate. In this connection I noted that my voice and intonations changed when I talked this way." (45)

Later, Gurdjieff spoke of the inability of any of the group members to fulfil the original task. Although they were apparently sincere and motivated to tell the story of their lives, they were unable to be truly honest and frank and, more importantly, they lacked genuine self-knowledge:

“You do not understand what it means to be sincere,” said G. “You are so used to lying both to yourselves and to others that you can find neither words nor thoughts when you wish to speak the truth. To tell the complete truth about oneself is very difficult. But before telling it one must know it. And you do not even know what the truth about yourselves consists of. Some day I will tell everyone of you his chief feature or chief fault. We shall then see whether you will understand me or not.” (46)

Counting Exercises

With some of his physical, sensing and breathing exercises, Gurdjieff employed the counting of numbers in order to suppress random associations from the intellectual center by placing the attention on counting. But certain exercises were focused entirely on counting in order to prevent students from being carried away by imagination between moments of work on oneself. One such exercise is described in a meeting with his French students in 1943:

During all your free time, count: one, two, three, four, five, six, up to fifty. Afterwards fifty, forty-nine, forty-eight, forty-seven, forty-six, etc., until you are back where you started. And if you do it seven times, five or ten minutes, sit down, relax and say to yourself: ‘I am,’ ‘I wish to be,’ ‘I can be,’ ‘I will help my neighbour when I shall be. I am.’ After that, count again. But consciously, not automatically. Do that all your free time. The first time it will seem absurd to you. But when you have done it for two or three weeks, you will thank me with all your heart. (47)

Analyzing an Object

In order to overcome associations and wayward concentration, Gurdjieff suggested an exercise to “think according to a definite order.” It was given at the Prieuré in 1923 and again, in a somewhat truncated version, in 1937 to the members of ‘the Rope.’ His instructions were: “Take any object and put it to your feeling; represent it to yourself with feeling. Then answer these questions. Remember, you must *experience* these feelings. You must stir up your mind and police with feeling. As you continue this exercise, you must diversify your objects.” (48) Here are the ten questions from the longer version of 1923:

1. Its origin
2. The cause of its origin
3. Its history
4. Its qualities and attributes
5. Objects connected with it and related to it

6. Its use and application
7. Its results and effects
8. What it explains and proves
9. Its end or its future
10. Your opinion, the cause and motives of this opinion. (49)

Working with Emotions and Habits

Gurdjieff told his pupils that inner work with the emotions is much more challenging and difficult than work with either the body or the mind: “At first they are even difficult to visualize. Yet they are the foremost importance to us. The realm of feeling comes first in our inner life; indeed, all our misfortunes are due to disorganized feelings. We have neither objective nor subjective feelings. The whole realm of our feeling is filled with something alien and completely mechanical.” (50)

Gurdjieff observed that negative emotions dominate our daily life, and especially our relationships with others. Almost everyone is annoyed at some point in the day with either “something or someone.” As an exercise, he suggested that when one is deeply impacted by an event or person, do not let its influence spread throughout the body. Instead, he counseled, try to control one’s automatic mechanical reaction. For instance, if insulted do not let the insult affect the whole of oneself. He gave a common example from everyday life:

Everything that touches us does so without our presence. It is arranged that way in us. We are slaves to it. For instance, she is antipathetic to me but she may be sympathetic to someone else. My reaction is in me. The thing that makes her antipathetic is in me. She is not to blame, she is antipathetic in relation to myself. Everything that reaches us in the course of the day, and in the course of our whole life, is relative to us. At times what reaches us may be good. This relativity is mechanical, just as the tensions in our muscles are mechanical. We are now learning to work. At the same time we also want to learn to be touched by what ought to touch us. As a rule we are touched by what ought not to touch us, for the things that touch us to the quick all day long should not have the power to touch us, since they have no real existence. This is an exercise in moral power. (51)

In a similar fashion, he advised his pupils to stop mechanical associative thinking whenever they were aware of its presence: “Do not let ‘it’ think, but try to stop ‘it’ often, whether what ‘it’ thinks is good or bad. As soon as we remember, as soon as we catch ourselves, we must stop ‘it’ from thinking . . . It is difficult not to let ‘it’ think. But it is possible.” (52)

In the process of inner development, Gurdjieff often gave exercises to aid in the struggle with deeply embedded habits to pupils who were beginning to work on themselves. For instance, for ingrained habits such as smoking, the student was asked to abstain for a certain period of time. Later they may resume smoking if they have learned to have conscious control over their habit.

Exercises to observe and identify everyday habitual behaviours were often based on the principle of alteration or “reversed order.” In other instances, noticing and transforming conditioned habits required a state of self-remembering. By experimenting with changing well-established habits, the body will be less of an automaton and be amenable to the wishes of ‘real I.’ The purpose of such exercises was to live less mechanically and more consciously. Some examples of such tasks of conscious awareness:

- Instead of washing one’s face or brushing one’s teeth with the dominant hand, use the other hand.
- When dressing, put the left foot sock on *first* rather than the right foot sock.
- When getting out of bed in the morning, reverse the side.
- Throughout the day open doors and flush the toilet with the non-dominant hand.
- Be present when taking the first mouthful of food at a meal.
- Change the pace and length of stride when walking down the street.

Self-remembering acts as a counter-force to automatism and conditioned thoughts and feelings. In one memorable exercise of self-remembering, Gurdjieff taught a group special movements for the arms and legs that corresponded to the letters of the alphabet. This new “language” became the only form of communication between members of the group. Thomas de Hartmann recounts his efforts with this new exercise in *Our Life with Mr. Gurdjieff*:

We practised them for a week; then suddenly Mr. Gurdjieff announced that within the Institute we were to speak only by means of these movements. We were not to utter even a single word, no matter what happened, not even in our own rooms. We could speak outside the Institute, but we could not go out without permission. Life began to be very complicated. How difficult it was to remember not to speak, especially in private! . . . Understanding that everything was done for our sake, we fulfilled the tasks. It was not blind obedience, for we saw the purpose. And how clearly we began to see our mechanicalness! We had to be aware of ourselves. Every moment we caught ourselves about to speak, but we remembered in time and stopped. It was difficult. (53)

An exercise presented to Gurdjieff’s French pupils in 1943 was designed to combat the power of identification (what he called “difficulty separating from oneself”) in our lives. Briefly, the instructions (54) were to choose three separate places (perhaps in a room) and first experience a sensation of heat in the body, then the sensation of cold and finally the sensation of being on the verge of tears, in that specific order.

The body has a natural inclination to resist demands originating from the mind or feelings. To overcome this “organic reluctance,” Gurdjieff sometimes recommended that pupils “punish” themselves by denying the body certain of its needs, such as food or rest, so as to overcome the physical inertia of the body and obey the wishes of the mind and feelings: “Deprive yourself of what you like. But have patience. Don’t get angry at yourself and beat yourself. Not to try all at once, but slowly, steadily. There is deep passivity. You must see this and struggle against it.” (55)

Active Mentation or Reasoning

Gurdjieff did not include meditation, as commonly understood, in his cornucopia of exercises. (56) Instead, he spoke of ‘active mentation’ or ‘active reasoning’ (similar to contemplation or pondering), in which both thinking and feeling are involved. But he added an important caveat: “You must not philosophize. You cannot keep out associations. Let them flow. But put them in a separate place. Pay no *attention* to them, but put your *intention* on a new activity . . . All parts must be made harmonic or bad results will be received.” (57)

In *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson*, he characterizes active mentation as a conscious, intentional and impartial exploration of “essence questions” in which the intellectual, emotional and moving centers contribute equally. A talk to his pupils at the Prieuré in 1923 provides an excellent example of “active reasoning” in dealing with a typical unpleasant event that occurs frequently in everyday life:

M. called me a fool. Why should I be offended? I don’t take offense, such things do not hurt me . . . I think, I reason in a way exactly the reverse of the usual way. He called me a fool. Must he necessarily be wise? He may himself be a fool or a lunatic. One cannot demand wisdom from a child. I cannot demand wisdom from him. His reasoning was foolish. Either someone has said something to him about me, or he formed his own foolish opinion that I am a fool – so much the worse for him. I know that I am not a fool, so it does not offend me. If a fool has called me a fool, I am not affected inside. But if in a given instance I was a fool and he called me a fool, I am not hurt because my task is not to be a fool. So he reminds me, helps me to realize that I am a fool and have acted foolishly. I shall think about it and perhaps not act foolishly next time. So I am not hurt in any case. (58)

Day Preparation and Review

Gurdjieff gave his students a “preparation exercise” to be practised every morning before the day’s activities. It was designed to strengthen the will by mentally rehearsing a program for the day and then trying to carry out, as much as possible, this carefully crafted plan for the day: “Choose precise tasks before launching yourself into life. When you are alone at home, relax and make a program for yourself. Picture to yourself what you have to do during the day. And promise yourself to follow that program exactly.” (59). But, he warned, this task is not easy:

You are going to fail, maybe ten times, maybe twenty times, but the twenty-first time you will be able to do what you decided to do, when you were alone. Then you go out into life and try to do exactly what you decided . . . You must above all not forget how you decided your program. Failing this you will have “the disease of tomorrow.” Avoid this. Decide: and when the time comes, do what you have decided. The sorriest man in the world is he who has “the disease of tomorrow.” He will never change. (60)

The counterpart to the morning “preparation exercise” was a “night review” exercise, to be conducted in the evening before going to bed. This particular exercise has a long history and even appears in the teachings of Pythagoras. According to Joseph Azize, it was received by A.R. Orage directly from Gurdjieff (61). The avowed purpose of the nightly review was “to provide us with self-knowledge, for we see ourselves as others do, and better perceiving our own faults, we acquire tolerance of others. The final promised benefit is an increase in strength of mind, will and concentration.” (62)

The exercise involves examining the day’s activities from the perspective of inner development by objectively and honestly appraising one’s degree of conscious awareness throughout the preceding day. Orage’s version of the exercise appears in C. Daly King’s *The Oragean Version*:

The Nightly Review [is] an exercise to be done upon retiring for the night. It poses these questions: What did I do today, i.e., what were my actual activities? What was the emotional history of the day? What was my real thinking today, if any, or was it all daydream from start to finish? No judgments, derogatory or congratulatory, should be allowed to intrude here; we are not trying to make either a better or a worse day of it, we are simply trying to find out how and what it was. Do not despair, do not hope; just look. (63)

A complementary exercise, the “Motion Picture,” expands on the earlier “Night Review” exercise by initially fully relaxing the body, emotions and mind before one visualizes the events of the day, from awakening in the morning to the present moment, as if it were one continuous motion picture: “At night, picture the day’s events with yourself as the central figure seen impersonally. Do the day from beginning, not backwards. Engage the mind and leave the emotional center free from the picture . . . After doing the day’s cinema, at some point do the cinema of your life.” (64)

The purpose of the exercise was to conscientiously make a concentrated effort to recall the entire sequence of the day’s events before falling asleep. “The most important thing in the exercise was to not let the attention wander – by associations. If one’s attention did wander from the focus upon the image of oneself, then it was absolutely necessary to begin all over again at the beginning each time this happened – and it would happen.” (65) The version of the exercise given by Orage is taken from *Gurdjieff’s Emissary in New York: Talks and Lectures with A.R. Orage 1924-1931*:

At the end of the day we should be able to rehearse by mental pictures the day’s activities, not cerebrally. You start with the first episode of the morning; then follow as closely as possible that figure which is you, as he goes through the day . . . This is difficult at first, but if you stick to just recalling the visual presentation of your day’s behaviour in sequence it becomes a real moving picture with you as the sole actor. At the start this takes some time but later it might become almost simultaneous. Sometimes you hear of people at the time of death having a review of their whole life come to them all in a minute. (66)

Atmosphere and Emanations

The “Atmosphere” exercise was a general exercise for all pupils, intended to create a ‘collected state’ as a precursor for self-remembering. It is based on Gurdjieff’s claim that every person has an atmosphere (67) which surrounds them, much like the atmosphere that surrounds the earth: “Every living thing has an atmosphere around itself. The difference lies only in its size. The larger the organism, the larger its atmosphere. The human atmosphere is composed of different elements which distinguish the atmospheres of different people . . . For a dog, it is impossible to confuse the atmosphere of one person with the atmosphere of another.” (68)

The aim of the exercise is to consciously prevent any emanations from leaving this atmosphere. It is practised to enable one to have a collected state by compelling the atmosphere to remain within its limits and not allowing it to go any further:

You represent to yourself that you are surrounded by an atmosphere. Like the earth, man also has an atmosphere, which surrounds him on all sides, for a meter, more or less – to a limit. In his atmosphere the associations, in ordinary life the thoughts – produce waves. It concentrates at certain places – it recedes; it has movements according to the direction in which you impart to it. This depends on the movement of your thought. Your atmosphere is displaced in the direction in which your thought goes . . . When you do this exercise, you represent to yourself that this atmosphere has limits. For example one meter and a half, shall we say. Then you concentrate all your attention on preventing your atmosphere from escaping beyond the limit. You do not allow it to go further than one meter or so. When you feel your atmosphere quietened, without waves, without movement, then with all your will you absorb it into yourself – you conserve yourself in this atmosphere. You draw it consciously into yourself. The more you can, the better it is. To start with, it is very tiring. (69)

Gurdjieff told his students that the exercise should initially be done in a quiet setting and later in everyday life as one becomes more proficient in doing the exercise. “At first, you can only *imagine* that you don’t let emanations flow out – but this imagination begins to make data for the second body and all this will pass over into the real thing, later.” (70)

Gurdjieff described the inner process that made the exercise effective as a conduit for self-remembering. Every living creature, he said, has emanations that radiate outward to create an atmosphere or surrounding “cloud” of emanations. It is possible to develop an “unchangeable source” by preventing emanations from flowing outward, through self-remembering. With this action, emanations are collected in a nexus or center of gravity of “contained force.” He stressed the importance of containing our emanations through conscious awareness: “When you start accumulating emanations, you find that there is a place in you for them. When you have many emanations accumulated, you find they will crystallize, then you have force. Not a force that can go out of you like water, but emanations crystallized. Then you can do many things with it.” (71)

The “Colour Spectrum” Exercise

Gurdjieff believed that the colours of the spectrum produced physiological and psychological effects in humans. For instance, red is said to be energizing and warming while green is calming. In *Life is Real Only Then, When “I Am,”* he suggested that the body, emotions and thoughts generate certain vibrations:

The vibrations given off by the whole presence of man in a state of complete relaxation constitute in themselves an atmosphere analogous to the spectrum of colors, having a known limit to its expansion. As soon as man begins to think, to feel or to move, this spectrum-like atmosphere changes, both as to the volume of its expansion and as to the quality of its presence. The greater the intensity of manifestation of one or another of the separate functions of the general psyche of man, the more the spectrum of his atmosphere is differentiated. (72)

The purpose of the exercise was to create an inner integrated force or strength: “The exercise links the awareness of the body to consciousness of the breath, and uses the medium of representing a sort of cloud of colour in order to link them together. That the white light should cover the whole of the body is consistent with Gurdjieff’s other exercises, which always work toward a unified and integrated ‘collected state.’ (73)

In the version Gurdjieff taught to his pupil George Adie there were four basic stages to the exercise (74):

1. Sensing various parts of the body in a particular order.
2. Again sensing the body, but adding the sensation of suffusing parts of the body with either white, violet, indigo, light blue, green, yellow, orange or red light.
3. Repeating the second stage but adding a breathing exercise.
4. Ending with a short period of collection and affirming “I Am.”

Reflecting on Human Relationships

Gurdjieff often told his pupils to “love all that exists.” He placed special significance on our relationships with family and friends, but he further extended the injunction to include everyone we come into contact with during our daily lives. We must realize that each of us is ultimately “the One Endlessness” manifesting through all other human beings and life forms. He therefore placed great emphasis on putting ourselves in the “shoes of others,” which is an expression of *agape* or unconditional love.

An exercise in the early stages of inner work was to place oneself in the position of another person and understand their viewpoint – how would I act in such and such a situation:

If I see that you are angry, then, knowing that you are not always like that, I will try to enter into your position. I ask myself how would I act in your place if someone were rude to me. If I ask this question often I shall soon

understand that if rudeness angers and hurts another there is always some reason for it at that moment. I shall soon understand that all people are alike – that no one is always bad or always good. We are all alike. (75)

Gurdjieff placed great importance on the necessity of remembering and loving our parents regardless if they were living or deceased. He spoke to his students about how they should value their relationships with and memories of their parents. By recalling their faces and voices with love and affection, he maintained that a subtle psychic force was generated which aided their inner struggle for the development of higher qualities:

In my opinion, the essence of all the spiritual qualities existing exclusively in man, as for instance, various impulses, strivings, etc., are engendered for their future development from the force and degree of his love for his parents. It is not in vain, that in one of the ancient philosophical teachings it is said: “Above everything on earth, even above God himself, is the love to one’s parents, especially those still living.” While parents are alive, God must be considered only as a future substitute in the heart of man for the place left empty by their death, and that is why God loves only that man, who loves his parents, because this man surely becomes the future receptacle for Him. (76)

In a talk to his French students in 1943 he gave an exercise for those whose parents have passed away which touched on the depths of love: “Whoever cannot love his or her parents cannot love God. Let us pause and ask ourselves: did we love our parents, did we love them as they deserved, or was it simply a case of ‘it loves,’ and how should we have loved?” (77)

I wish to help you. Are your parents still alive? I have not known them, but perhaps they had souls. Perhaps they suffered. You must do something for them. You must think of them. You must picture them to yourself, see them again, have their faces before your eyes, you must think of all you owe them. You are a small piece of them, of their life. You must love them, express your gratitude to them. Think back to all they have done for you. You must see your mistakes toward them. Persist in this, reconstruct the scenes when you made them suffer, perhaps cry. Re-live these experiences. You must have remorse of conscience. Remorse. One must suffer voluntarily to repair. The past must be repaired. (78)

In a previously unpublished text, Gurdjieff spoke personally about his own parents:

Always when I am either in danger or in a difficult situation, or in sorrow at not having attained some aim, I definitely hear the calming or encouraging words of my mother or father, depending on whether there is need for physical or moral forces, and this immediately strengthens me to such a degree, that I surmount that which a minute before seemed to be quite insurmountable, and calms me so that I feel that I am under their constant and never failing protection. As for the secret, it consists in this, that every morning and every evening, wherever I may find myself, I urgently recall their dear faces and say to myself as a prayer, all kinds of good wishes toward them. (79)

Visualization and Telepathy

In the 1930s, Gurdjieff taught members of ‘the Rope’ an exercise in visualization for the development of ‘inner vision.’ He addressed one of the pupils: “Look at any object, then suddenly shut your eyes and go on seeing it without any break. Any break in the attention when shutting your eyes means you must begin again. Without a break in attention, go on seeing inwardly the exact details of what you last saw with your eyes. All this makes for inner visions, which becomes power in time . . . There was a time, thirty years ago, when I could split that table with thought.” (80)

The next stage of the exercise was to visualize a person that one knows well as a prelude to making a telepathic connection later:

There is a very good method for seeing from inside, and that is knowing exactly in what direction the person you are thinking of is located. That will help you and it is easy to do. I advise you to visit each other’s apartment if possible. Try to know as exactly as possible in what place and in what conditions each one of you lives. This is very important for later, if you want to do this exercise in detail. You can readily establish a telepathic contact, like with a telephone. You are an apparatus; the other person, another apparatus. Begin by getting to know the places where your friends live and approximately when they go to bed. If you take all this into consideration, it will help you . . . You must go there in thought. You can ask each person how they like to spend their time, what posture they prefer, so that you can visualize them in this posture. Ask them how they dress at home. The more details you know, the better you will be able to visualize them. In general, everyone understands this exercise. But it is only a preparation: little by little you must prepare yourself for another exercise. There may be a great deal of preparation before doing the real exercise. (81)

Many of Gurdjieff’s pupils (P.D. Ouspensky, Jeanne de Salzmann, John G. Bennett, C.S. Nott, Nicolas Tereshchenko) attested to his telepathic abilities. In one novel group exercise presented to his Paris students in 1944, he suggested that through a shared consciousness (acting as a brotherhood) they could influence events at a distance: “You can have a reciprocal action on a whole city. Paris is big . . . but if one movement is produced in a corner of this atmosphere it will spread over all.” (82)

According to Gurdjieff, the basis of the exercise (sometimes referred to as the “Web” exercise) is autosuggestion and “representations by forms.” The atmosphere of each group member can connect with the others to form a whole network much like a spider web. As the group atmosphere expands it creates an energy or current which Gurdjieff described as a sensation of warmth or heat: “Imagine that in you there is a network. If one current comes in one point, it shall arrive everywhere, if one sensation of warmth is in one point, all the points shall feel the heat. Picture how what happens in one place happens everywhere.” (83)

The web exercise shows the power of a spiritual force of an animating wish produced in a group for the benefit of all humanity. Joseph Azize:

Implicit in Gurdjieff's teaching is a view of the world in which there are invisible realities that are the result of our own human actions and states and, now that they are in existence, make possible new connections and undreamt-of assistance . . . Whatever new element enters the web, even at one point alone, by that very fact enters the web as a whole. Movement is effectively instantaneous in time and space, for conscious activity is realized in higher dimensions. (84)

Contacting Saints and Sacred Places

A number of Gurdjieff's inner exercises involved a contact with a subtle substance which can "feed us from within." This is very similar to the Sufi concept of *baraka* (blessing or spiritual energy). According to Gurdjieff, it is possible to establish a link with past or present saints and certain places of "divine force" – so-called power spots. He believed that the prayers and vibrations of those worshipping saints and realized beings rose into the earth's atmosphere:

They collect together to form at a certain level above the atmosphere of the earth a sort of reservoir or foyer of substances . . . Man can, if he tries with determination, enter into contact with this foyer of substances formed from the concentration of the vibrations sent by the believers towards their ideal, and man can assimilate these substances and accumulate them in himself. He can do it by establishing, through the concentration of his will, a connection in the form of a line or thread between this foyer and some part or other of his own body. (85)

Gurdjieff also believed that certain locations on earth were repositories of spiritual energy or *baraka* generated by prayer, worship, inner work or certain meditative states of consciousness, and that it was possible to make contact with, and receive, such a concentration of finer energies. To achieve this aim, he devised an exercise in which four spiritual figures were contemplated in a specific location above the country where they formerly lived: Mohammed above Mecca and Medina, Christ above Jerusalem, Buddha above India and Lama above Tibet.

The first stage of the exercise, called "The Four Ideals," was to establish a mental contact between a limb of the body and the concentrated substances in the atmosphere. The second stage involved conscious breathing in order to draw the substances into certain parts of the body while inwardly repeating "I am." In *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises*, Joseph Azize summarizes the five essential components of this exercise (86):

There are five essential theoretical elements to this exercise:

1. "Higher substances" form certain "reservoirs" above the earth.
2. These "higher substances" come from emanations and vibrations that arise when people pray to the "ideal" who lived on the spot on the earth immediately below.

3. An exercise can attract and ingest these materials by means of a connection.
4. The connection between the exercitant and the accumulation is made through the medium of a temporary thread formed by concentration.
5. Implicitly it is an advantage for an exercitant to be able to digest these substances.

The idea of there being substances high out in space, almost like some hovering cloud, formed by the emanations of believers, is nothing if not unusual. But even this is not so original as the notion that the substances are available as a resource to us if we can enter into contact with them. There is nothing like effect in *Beelzebub*, and Gurdjieff has not previously mentioned “reservoirs of substances,” let alone an ideal that is itself too far for us to reach. Neither am I aware of any suggestion that Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed, and Lama do in fact subsist somewhere in space. (87)

Transformation of ‘Cosmic Substances’

In certain psychological exercises the transformation of ‘cosmic substances’ in the air was a primary component. In Gurdjieff’s teaching, air is the second food and plays an important role in the growth of ‘higher bodies.’ Air acts as a shock to complete one of the stages in the creation of higher ‘hydrogens,’ as depicted in the ‘Food Diagram.’ Gurdjieff: “There are two parts to air, evolving and involving. Only the involving part can vivify the ‘I.’ At present this involving part serves only for general cosmic purposes. Only when you shall have in yourselves a conscious wish will you be able to assimilate this, for you, good part of air, which comes from the prime source.” (88)

In *Teachings of Gurdjieff*, C.S. Nott describes the psychological attitude and inner work required to develop the qualities of faith, hope and love:

In order to be able to assimilate the involving part of air, you should try to realize your own significance and the significance of those around you. You are mortal, and some day will die. He on whom your attention rests is your neighbour; he will also die. Both of you are nonentities. At present, most of your suffering is “suffering in vain.”; it comes from feelings of anger, jealousy, and resentment towards others. If you acquire data always to realize the inevitability of their death and your own death, you will have a feeling of pity for others, and be just towards them, since their manifestations which displease you are only because you or someone has stepped on their corns, or because your own corns are sensitive. At present you cannot see this . . . Only if you always try to sense this significance until it becomes a habit whenever your attention rests on anyone, only then will you be able to assimilate the good part of air and have a real ‘I.’ Every man has wants and desires which are dear to him, and which he will lose at death. From realizing the significance of your neighbour when your attention rests on him, that he will die, pity for him and compassion towards him will arise in you, and finally you will love him; also, by doing this constantly, real faith, conscious faith, will arise in some part of you and spread to other parts, and you will have the possibility of knowing real happiness, because from this faith objective hope will arise – hope as a basis for continuation. (89)

This important exercise is an injunction for the attainment of a ‘higher being body’ which reflects the essence qualities of faith, hope, love and compassion. A number of significant themes emerge in Gurdjieff’s instructions for the exercise:

- The importance of properly assimilating the involving part of air which has its source from “above” in the higher levels of the ‘Ray of Creation’ is central.
- Through “conscious wish” substances can be digested from the air beyond merely maintaining our physical existence.
- The importance of “dying before you die” – the realization of one’s nothingness and insignificance in the cosmic scheme. The real “I” only emerges with the death of the ego (rebirth). “The first enlightenment on the Fourth Way is that man *does not exist*; he must realize that he can lose nothing because he has nothing to lose; he must realize his ‘nothingness’ in the full sense of the term. One will not make sacrifices to gain what one already believes one has.” (90)
- Awareness of one’s own death can be a reminding factor guiding our conduct in everyday life. In *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson*, Gurdjieff writes: “Every one of those unfortunates during the process of existence should constantly sense and be cognizant of the inevitability of their own death as well as the death of every one upon whom his eyes or attention rests. Only such a sensation and such a cognizance can now destroy the egoism completely crystallized in them that has swallowed up the whole of their Essence.” (91)
- Human beings have the possibility of actualizing the higher virtues of hope, faith, love and compassion.
- Love is both the means and the goal of inner development and self-realization. Gurdjieff: “Real love is the basis of all, the foundation, the Source.”

The “I Am” Exercise

The repeated affirmation of “I Am” was a central feature of many of the exercises that Gurdjieff gave his pupils, especially during the final (1940-1949) period of his teaching. Many of Gurdjieff’s students felt that the “I Am” exercise was the foundation of many of his most important exercises and, perhaps, his entire teaching. And Gurdjieff clearly recognized its significance, as he titled his third series of writings *Life is Real Only Then, When “I Am.”*

According to Gurdjieff the purpose of the exercise was to attain a sense of *conscious presence* and acquire a permanent “I” by making contact with one’s essence: “Remember yourself all the time. Make it permanent with “I Am.” Sense yourself as often as possible, and the more you can sense yourself inwardly the better your future.” (92)

Gurdjieff considered the exercise to be “objective,” as it was suitable for everyone and affected each in the same way. He suggested that it should first be practised in a quiet ‘collected state’ before venturing into the whirl of everyday life activities. He also counseled students that the exercise required a great deal of time and practice to bear fruit, and not to expect immediate results.

The “I Am” exercise is based on the organic sensation of oneself being *present in the moment* – “I am here now.” Gurdjieff: “Remember yourself often, as often as possible, with the sensation of remembering ‘I am,’ and sensing yourself, sensing your whole presence.” (93) He told his students that this was both the foundation and goal of inner work:

Your work must consist of two things. Get better acquainted with your non-entirety and with the sensing of remembering yourself: “I am,” and of experiencing yourself. And each time that reverberates in your common presence you remember that you are. And all the impressions, all the associations, make them reverberate in your common presence and remember that you are. And when you remember, then say “I am” and feel in all your being that you are.” (94)

Gurdjieff taught that the sensation of oneself being present was a cardinal feature of the third state of consciousness which he termed *self-remembering*, and opened the path to real self-development, leading to eventual self-realization. Such a state of “collected attention” brings together the faculties of thinking, feeling and sensing in a harmonious and blended sense of presence and being:

The pure feeling of “*I am*” has no object. I can understand it only if I am capable of seeing without an idea, word or image, able to be in contact with *what is*. I begin to see that the world in which I live is a world of fiction. It is not real. The vision I have of myself is not a vision of my own reality. I see myself through the thinking, lost in my imagination of “I.” For short moments only, I touch on something real in myself – I have a feeling “*I am*.” The feeling I have of myself makes me know my reality. At this moment, and only at this moment, I know that *I am*. I am at the source. I now have a measure of my reality, which is reality itself rather than my usual state with my ordinary perception. This reality is always here. It needs to become the center of attraction for my feeling. (95)

In a talk to his French pupils in 1944, Gurdjieff provided the rudiments of the “I Am” exercise. Later he added other dimensions to the exercise involving breathing and specific parts of the body. The basic instructions were:

When you say “I am” you will sense that you are in yourself, you will sense in the whole of the body – the echo of “I” – and when you say “am” you will have the sensation, completely, that you are you . . . When you are in the state of self-remembering – half of your attention must be concentrated on the “I am” and the other half must control the keeping of the state. Your head plays the

role of policeman. It watches for you to guard your state. With the other half of the attention: "I am." Done in this way it is normal that attention diminishes. One must do thousands and thousands of times what I tell you . . . First of all get used to staying in a collected state. (96)

A certain amount of preparation is necessary to maximize the full benefit of the exercise. To enter the collected state of "I am" the body must be quiet and relaxed, the breathing slow and rhythmical. Jeanne de Salzman describes the preparation of the body and subsequent experience of the direct sensation of "I Am" in *The Reality of Being*: "I let go naturally and deeply. I learn the true meaning of relaxing. I let go. I give up, for the sake of collectedness. When the relaxation is deep enough and I am more collected, I see that the state of my body has great importance for the capacity of my attention." (97)

The "I Am" exercise is usually accompanied by an awareness of the rhythm of the inhalation and exhalation of the breath. This usually occurs after the body becomes fully relaxed and free of tension. Students were instructed to say "I" on the inhalation of the breath as they assimilate the 'active elements' of the air. During the exhalation they were told to say "Am" as the fine energy of the active elements of the air are directed and accumulated in the "battery" or solar plexus.

Throughout the whole process, the mind, feeling and body need to work in tandem. Gurdjieff: "Breathe in – "I." Breathe out – "am." Do with all three parts. Not just mind. Feeling and body also . . . The exercise will enable you, with the aid of conscious labor, to coat higher bodies in yourself from active elements in the air you breathe." (98) Jeanne de Salzman adds further details:

Now that I feel freer, I turn to my breathing. I breathe gently, without holding back, without fear of losing myself. I trust this movement and allow all ideas, all notions to dissolve. I am not afraid to exhale completely. And I discover a new meaning, a sense of the sacred in my human self. And yet it is the active force of the air that I should trust. When I feel more balanced, I breathe as though through the centers and silently say, "I Am." When I say "I," I feel the three centers and when I say "Am," I also feel them. When I breathe in, I say "I" and represent to myself that the active elements of the air are entering. When I breathe out, I say "Am" and feel them flow into and fill my body. I do not try to make anything more of this "I" and "Am," simply say the words to myself. (99)

For Gurdjieff, the solar plexus was a receptacle of higher energies assimilated from the air. With the enunciation and repetition of the words "I Am," a vibratory reverberation is created in the solar plexus, which is said to vivify the life force. "Practice saying 'I Am,' having 'I' resonate in your solar plexus and 'am' in your whole being. Repeat this a hundred times. The solar plexus is your conscious center. It is what connects all your parts. It is 'You.' This is where you must feel your self-remembering resonate." (100)

Gurdjieff indicated that certain exercises were to be practised in the conditions of daily life as guides and stimuli for conscious living: “One is to discharge one’s duty in life, gradually doing more and more consciously, by coming to a three-centered sense of ‘I am’ with the help of a daily program.” (101)

One of the remarkable qualities of the “I Am” exercise, which is based on bare self-awareness, is its remarkable simplicity and relevance to everyday life. Joseph Azize: “At the end, Gurdjieff brought all the rich and diverse content of his system back to basics, relating the inner life to the outer life.” (102)

Ultimately, the aim of the exercise is to acquire a permanent “I” that will manifest in ordinary life. To accomplish this requires repeated practice and perseverance. Gurdjieff: “I am collected, present, and at the same time without associations. Reaffirm ‘I am’ again and again. Never forget it. Little by little, your ‘I’ will have contact with your essence. It is necessary to repeat this many, many times.” (103)

The culmination of the “I Am” exercise is in its manifestation in the travails of daily life. Solange Claustres shares the final of a series of ‘presence’ exercises assigned to her by Gurdjieff, in *Becoming Conscious with G.I. Gurdjieff*:

The principle of this last exercise was the basis for a way of conducting oneself in all aspects of one’s life, guiding it always. This final exercise marked the end of the series. Briefly described, the exercise was to divide one’s life into four parts:

1. To earn one’s living, for oneself and one’s family
2. To allow the mechanicalness of one’s functions in life
3. To eat, sleep, and perform vital functions in a healthy and correct manner
4. To work towards developing an inner consciousness of self, and little by little, to enable this consciousness to penetrate the other three parts. That is to say: *to become conscious and present to oneself in all the moments of one’s life.* (104)

Students and scholars have observed that there is a significant mystical dimension or spiritual quality to the “I Am” exercise. It challenges one to probe deeper and deeper into the mystery of existence and the wonder of being alive. At the same time, there is a grounding in ordinary life which prevents any escapism and other-worldly fantasies:

Gurdjieff is saying, in a roundabout way, that through these exercises one can understand the purpose of the whole of the universe at all levels, including that of one’s self. The maintenance of one’s own individual reality, even in the experience of the All, is one of the aspects of Gurdjieff’s teaching that makes it rare. One does not “lose oneself” in any divine or holy realm, at least not through pursuing these exercises. Whatever awareness one has of the All is predicated on awareness of oneself, and of the divine impulses operating within oneself. The gap between the divine and the worldly is thus bridged: It is vast, perhaps even unimaginable, but it is not infinite. (105)

NOTES

- (1) C.S. Nott *Teachings of Gurdjieff* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974), p.8.
- (2) Henri Thomasson speaks to the cosmological dimension of the Movements in *The Pursuit of the Present* (Aurora, Oregon: Two Rivers Press, 1980), p.55:

I began to realize the many-sided nature of these movements. At first sight they seem only to be exercises of attention, but they can also be regarded as a language in the sense that, by symbolic gestures and other signs, postures and displacements, they express cosmic laws which are difficult to perceive through our ordinary senses and are even beyond the scope of our present understanding. Some movements seem quite clearly to offer a means of transmitting knowledge that rational thought cannot grasp to levels in a man which are higher than any he can ordinarily reach. He can feel a sort of alchemical process taking place in him that not only gives him glimpses of 'the Way,' but enables him to move in that direction.

- (3) C.S. Nott *Journey Through This World* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974), p. 241.
- (4) C.S. Nott *Journey Through This World* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974), pp. 240-241.
- (5) Roger Lipsey *Gurdjieff Reconsidered: The Life, the Teachings, the Legacy* (Boulder: Shambhala, 2019), p. 114.
- (6) Pauline de Dampierre "The Role of the Movements" in Jacob Needleman and George Baker (eds.) *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching* (New York: Continuum, 1996), p. 291.
- (7) Pauline de Dampierre "The Role of the Movements" in Jacob Needleman and George Baker (eds.) *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching* (New York: Continuum, 1996), pp. 290-291.
- (8) The degree of complexity of even relatively simple movements is highlighted in an essay by Lynn Quirolo, "Inside the Enneagram" in David Kherdian (ed.) *A Stopinder Anthology* (Mount Desert, Maine: Beech Hill Publishing, 2014), p. 186:

The movements were typically taught in stages. For example, (1) learn four arm gestures assigned numbers one through four; (2) do the gestures in permutation (1-2-3-4, 2-3-4-1, 3-4-1-2, 4-1-2-3); (3) learn six feet positions and then do them simultaneously with arm gestures; (4) add a right-left head turn on odd counts; (5) say "remember" on every arm gesture.

- (9) Solange Claustres *Becoming Conscious with G.I. Gurdjieff* (Utrecht, the Netherlands, 2009), pp. 106-107.

- (10) Solange Claustres *Becoming Conscious with G.I. Gurdjieff* (Utrecht, the Netherlands, 2009), p. 74.
- (11) To truly understand the nature and intent of the Movements, and correctly perform them, a teacher is required who is part of an authentic lineage originating from Gurdjieff himself, and not someone self-appointed or associated with a pseudo Fourth Way “teaching.” Wim van Dullemen is a longtime musician and practitioner of the Movements. In his essay “A Taste of the Sacred: Gurdjieff Movements” in David Kherdian (ed.) *A Stopinder Anthology* (Mount Desert, Maine, Beech Hill Publishing, 2014, pp. 260-261), he addresses concerns about the qualifications of Movements teachers in the contemporary world:

Movements can only be learned in an authentic line of transmission. Study of them will take years of determined effort, not only in Movements, but in Gurdjieff’s teaching as a whole. Any learning process has stages. It requires the acquisition of new knowledge, the absorption and digestion of this material, and finally the application in practice of what has been learned in theory. In learning movements these stages add up to a minimum of seven years. It only makes sense to study with a teacher who knows the Movements, is willing to give the whole Movement and not just in fragments, and is able to stimulate the class in its inner work. A transmission is authentic when founded by a personal pupil of Gurdjieff. The Institut Gurdjieff in Paris and the related Foundations stand out because of their historical bonds, their competence, the size of their organization, and because all were led by Mme Jeanne de Salzmann.

- (12) Marthe de Gaigneron “Sacred dances” in Jacob Needleman and George Baker (eds.) *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching* (New York: Continuum, 1996), p. 298.
- (13) Marthe de Gaigneron “Sacred Dances” in Jacob Needleman and George Baker (eds.) *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching* (New York: Continuum, 1996), p. 297.
- (14) Kenneth Walker vividly describes his experience of the Movements in *Venture With Ideas* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1972), p. 121:

Mr. Gurdjieff’s exercises showed me very clearly that my capacity to direct my attention wherever I liked was less than I had believed it to be. The exercises in which I now began to take part were such that they could not be performed mechanically but only by maintaining the strictest awareness of what one was doing. Head, body, arms and legs often moved in different rhythms and when it seemed natural to turn in a certain direction the exercise often dictated that one should turn in the opposite direction. To make things still more difficult a number of intellectual exercises were added to the movement exercises, such as counting backwards or repeating lists of disconnected words in a foreign tongue. The slightest wandering of the attention threw the whole affair out of gear and the fact that something had gone radically

wrong became as obvious to the pupil as it did to the teacher. The exercises acted therefore as a very sensitive indicator of the performer's inner state.

- (15) Patty de Llosa *The Practice of Presence* (Sandpoint, Idaho: Morning Light Press, 2006), p. 36.
- (16) Lynn Quirolo "Inside the Enneagram" in David Kherdian (ed.) *A Stopinder Anthology* (Mount Desert, Maine: Beech Hill Publishing, 2014), p. 186.
- (17) Marthe de Gaigneron "Sacred dances" in Jacob Needleman and George Baker (eds.) *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching* (New York: Continuum, 1996), p. 297.
- (18) Biographer Roger Lipsey describes the force and loftiness of the 'first obligatory' when accompanied by music in *Gurdjieff Reconsidered: The Life, the Teachings, the Legacy* (Boulder: Shambhala, 2019), p. 113:

The music of the First Obligatory begins with a swirl of four rapid notes rising to a majestic G minor chord of the dominant. It is a call to be and to act – but one holds still, listening, absorbing the energy of the chord, finding oneself. External movement begins only with a second bold chord – and on from there through a sequence of movements and tempi that progressively add complexity and speed. The initial stillness and listening are a teaching, as is all that follows in its demand for relaxed balance to coordinate dynamic movements of the arms, legs, and head. The Movement as a whole establishes a center – it is oneself – while the changing tempi and increasing complexity ask that center to be steady and keen. The music ranges over a sequence of feelings from majesty and gravity to aerial lightness – and back around again.

- (19) William Patrick Patterson *Georgi Ivanovitch Gurdjieff: The Man, The Teaching, His Mission* (Fairfax, California: Arete Communications, 2014), pp. 483-484.
- (20) John G. Bennett *Gurdjieff: Making a New World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 229.
- (21) Henri Thomasson *The Pursuit of the Present* (Aurora, Oregon: Two Rivers Press, 1980), p.57.
- (22) Henri Thomasson *The Pursuit of the Present* (Aurora, Oregon: Two Rivers Press, 1980), p.56.
- (23) Jacob Needleman "Introduction" in Jacob Needleman (ed.) *The Inner Journey: Views from the Gurdjieff Work* (Sandpoint, Idaho: Morning Light Press, 2008), p. xix.
- (24) Patty de Llosa *Awakening Body Consciousness* (Eastbourne, England: Sussex Academic Press, 2020), pp. 113-114.

- (25) Christian Wertenbaker *The Enneagram of G.I. Gurdjieff* (New Paltz, New York: Codhill Press, 2017), p. 98.
- (26) Ricardo Guillon *Record of a Search: Working with Michel Conge in France* (Toronto: Traditional Studies Press, 2004), p. 13.
- (27) The importance of the body as a means of inner development is stressed by teachers of the Movements such as Pauline de Dampierre (“The Role of the Movements” in Jacob Needleman and George Baker (eds.) *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching* New York: Continuum, 1996), pp. 294-295:

We have to answer for the way we live throughout the whole course of our lives. And there, too, the body plays an important role. Its influence is continuous. When the body remains in a state of tension, it restrains the possibility of an opening, keeping us in a state of heaviness, dispersal and forgetfulness. But when the tension begins to recede, the body allows a finer energy to appear. Then the body is ready to serve the higher state of presence. This is how a study of the Movements can help us. They develop very special sensitivity just below the surface in all the situations of our lives. Thus a link is made between the Movements and the other aspects of the teaching. The study of these Movements shows us how the body always has a role to play in serving our inherent need for harmony.

- (28) Pauline de Dampierre “The Role of the Movements” in Jacob Needleman and George Baker (eds.) *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching* (New York: Continuum, 1996), p. 294.
- (29) Marthe de Gaigneron “Sacred Dances” in Jacob Needleman and George Baker (eds.) *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching* (New York: Continuum, 1996), p. 297.
- (30) John G. Bennett’s vivid recollection of the “Stop” exercise during a public demonstration of sacred dances in Constantinople in 1920 captures the strangeness of the spectacle in his autobiography *Witness* (New York: Dharma Book Company, 1962), p. 68:

[The dancers] lined up at the back of the room, while de Hartmann played a series of chords. Gurdjieff shouted an order in Russian and all the dancers jumped in the air and rushed at full speed toward the spectators. Suddenly Gurdjieff in a loud voice shouted “Stop!” and everyone froze in their tracks. Most of the dancers, being carried by the momentum of their rush, fell and rolled over and over on the floor. As they came to rest they became rigid like people in a cataleptic trance. There was a long silence. Gurdjieff gave another order and all quietly got up.

- (31) C.S. Nott *Teachings of Gurdjieff* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974), p. 13.

(32) John G. Bennett *Witness* (New York: Dharma Book Company, 1962), pp. 120-121.

(33) The teacher must have the requisite technical knowledge to ascertain the suitable time and situation in which to signal 'Stop.' As well, students are not able to do it themselves for a number of significant reasons, as Gurdjieff outlined to his students in P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 354:

It must be understood that in order to bring into action a sufficient strength of will to keep a man in an unaccustomed position an order or command from outside: 'stop,' is indispensable. A man cannot give himself the command *stop*. He will not obey this command. The reason for this is that the combination of habitual thinking, feeling, and moving postures is stronger than a man's will. The command *stop*, which, in relation to moving postures, comes from outside, takes the place of thinking and feeling postures. These postures and their influence are so to speak removed by the command *stop* – and *in this case* moving postures obey the will.

(34) C.S. Nott *Teachings of Gurdjieff* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974), p.13.

(35) G.I. Gurdjieff *Views from the Real World: Early Talks of Gurdjieff* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1973), p. 156.

(36) G.I. Gurdjieff *Views from the Real World: Early Talks of Gurdjieff* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1973), pp. 156-157.

(37) The universality of the automatism of the thinking, feeling and moving functions that characterize much of human behaviour was emphasized in a talk to Gurdjieff's pupils recorded by P.D. Ouspensky in *In Search of the Miraculous* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 352:

The character of the movements and postures in every epoch, in every race, and in every class is indissolubly connected with different forms of the thinking and feeling. A man is unable to change the form of his thinking or his feeling until he has changed his repertory of postures and movements. Every man has a definite number of thinking and feeling postures and movements. Moreover moving, thinking, and feeling postures are connected with one another and he can never move out of this repertory of thinking and feeling postures unless he changes his moving postures . . . every one of our movements, voluntary or involuntary, is an unconscious transition from one posture to another, both equally mechanical.

(38) G.I. Gurdjieff *Views from the Real World: Early Talks of Gurdjieff* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1973), p. 167.

(39) G.I. Gurdjieff *Views from the Real World: Early Talks of Gurdjieff* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1973), p. 167.

- (40) G.I. Gurdjieff *Views from the Real World: Early Talks of Gurdjieff* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1973), pp. 157-158.
- (41) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 354.
- (42) In *Psychological Exercises and Essays*, A.R. Orage provides over 200 exercises involving counting, words and spatial perception to develop the mind. Orage was Gurdjieff's chief emissary and group leader in New York, and many of the exercises were inspired by his work with his teacher. However, following the publication of the book in 1930, Gurdjieff was enraged and repudiated many of the exercises, declaring that they were Orage's own inventions.
- (43) Tcheslaw Tchekhovitch *Gurdjieff: A Master in Life* (Toronto: Dolmen Meadow Editions, 2006), pp. 118-119.
- (44) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 247.
- (45) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 248.
- (46) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 249.
- (47) G.I. Gurdjieff *Transcripts of Gurdjieff's Meetings 1941-1946* (London: Book Studio, 2009), p. 73.
- (48) Solita Solano and Kathryn Hulme *Gurdjieff and the Women of the Rope* (London: Book Studio, 2012), p.157.
- (49) G.I. Gurdjieff *Views from the Real World: Early Talks of Gurdjieff* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1973), p. 106.
- (50) G.I. Gurdjieff *Views from the Real World: Early Talks of Gurdjieff* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1973), pp. 171-172.
- (51) G.I. Gurdjieff *Views from the Real World: Early Talks of Gurdjieff* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1973), p. 162.
- (52) G.I. Gurdjieff *Views from the Real World: Early Talks of Gurdjieff* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1973), p. 162.
- (53) Thomas and Olga de Hartmann *Our Life with Mr. Gurdjieff* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), pp. 62-63.

- (54) A more detailed description of the exercise appears in *Paris Meetings 1943* (Toronto: Dolmen Meadow Editions, 2017), pp. 101-102.
- (55) Ravi Ravindra *Heart without Measure: Work with Madame de Salzman* (Halifax: Shaila Press, 199), p. 20.
- (56) Jeanne de Salzman introduced a ‘sitting meditation’ exercise in her Work groups in the early 1960s. They emphasized receptivity and opening to higher influences and energies and were quite controversial as it seemed to contradict Gurdjieff’s emphasis on conscious effort and inner struggle. In *Gurdjieff: The Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 2003, p. 156), Sophia Wellbeloved elaborates in a section termed “New Work Terminology”:
- The exercise of the attention, which used to be referred to in English as ‘morning preparation,’ has been changed in process and aim, and is now referred to as ‘meditation’ or ‘sitting’ (terms probably taken from the Zen practice of *zazen*). Sitting is also used to refer to groups of pupils meditating together; in London this began in the 1960s and was known as ‘special work.’ The receptive mode may have been part of Gurdjieff’s late teaching in the 1940s. Receptivity is not referred to in beneficial terms in Gurdjieff’s writings, nor his pupils’ memoirs, all of which emphasize the necessity for struggle and effort.
- (57) Joseph Azize *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 107.
- (58) G.I. Gurdjieff *Gurdjieff’s Early Talks 1914-1931* (London: Book Studio, 2014), p. 241.
- (59) Nicolas Tereshchenko *Mister Gurdjieff and the Fourth Way* (Austin, Texas: Kesdjan Publishing, 2003), p. 174.
- (60) Nicolas Tereshchenko *Mister Gurdjieff and the Fourth Way* (Austin, Texas: Kesdjan Publishing, 2003), pp. 174-175.
- (61) The exercise appears in Orage’s essay “On Dying Daily” in *Psychological Exercises and Essays*. Jane Heap, who likely learned it from Orage, taught it to Kathryn Hulme and, later, to her pupil Annie-Lou Staveley.
- (62) Joseph Azize *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 118.
- (63) C. Daly King *The Oragean Version* (Utrecht, the Netherlands: Eureka Editions, 2014), p. 167.
- (64) William Patrick Patterson *Georgi Ivanovitch Gurdjieff: The Man, The Teaching, His Mission* (Fairfax, California: Arete Communications, 2014), p. 317.

- (65) Fritz Peters *Boyhood with Gurdjieff* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 19672, p. 163.
- (66) A.R. Orage *Gurdjieff's Emissary in New York: Talks and Lectures with A.R. Orage 1924-1931* (London: Book Studio, 2016), p. 422.
- (67) Gurdjieff spoke of the atmosphere surrounding a human being in greater detail in *Views from the Real World: Early Talks of Gurdjieff* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1973), p. 212:
- Man's atmosphere does not necessarily have the shape of a sphere. It constantly changes its form. In times of strain, of threat or of danger, it becomes stretched out in the direction of the strain. Then the opposite side becomes thinner. Man's atmosphere takes up a certain space. Within the limits of this space it is attracted by the organism, but beyond a certain limit particles of the atmosphere become torn off and return no more. This can happen if the atmosphere is greatly stretched out in one direction. The same happens when a man moves. Particles of his atmosphere become torn off, are left behind and produce a "trail" by which a man can be traced. These particles may quickly mix with the air and dissolve, but they may also stay in place for a fairly long time. Particles of atmosphere also settle on a man's clothes, underclothes and other things belonging to him, so that a kind of track remains between them and the man.
- (68) G.I. Gurdjieff *Views from the Real World: Early talks of Gurdjieff* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1973), p. 211.
- (69) G.I. Gurdjieff *Transcripts of Gurdjieff's Meetings 1941-1946* (London: Book Studio, 2009), pp. 148-149.
- (70) Solita Solano and Kathryn Hulme *Gurdjieff and the Women of the Rope* (London: Book Studio, 2012), p. 24.
- (71) Solita Solano and Kathryn Hulme *Gurdjieff and the Women of the Rope* (London: Book Studio, 2012), p. 10.
- (72) G.I. Gurdjieff *Life is Real Only Then, When "I Am"* (New York: Triangle Editions, 1975), pp. 176-177.
- (73) Joseph Azize *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 257.
- (74) A detailed description of the exercise appears in Joseph Azize *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 255-258.
- (75) G.I. Gurdjieff *Views from the Real World: Early talks of Gurdjieff* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1973), p. 146.

- (76) G.I. Gurdjieff *Gurdjieff's Early Talks 1914-1931* (London: Book Studio, 2014), p. 419.
- (77) G.I. Gurdjieff *Views from the Real World: Early talks of Gurdjieff* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1973), p. 173.
- (78) William Patrick Patterson *Voices in the Dark* (Fairfax, California: Arete Communications, 2001), p. 162.
- (79) G.I. Gurdjieff *Gurdjieff's Early Talks 1914-1931* (London: Book Studio, 2014), p. 420.
- (80) Roger Lipsey *Gurdjieff Reconsidered: The Life, the Teachings, the Legacy* (Boulder: Shambhala, 2019), p. 161.
- (81) G.I. Gurdjieff *Paris Meetings 1943* (Toronto: Dolmen Meadow Editions, 2017), pp. 266-267.
- (82) G.I. Gurdjieff *Transcripts of Gurdjieff's Meetings 1941-1946* (London: Book Studio, 2009), p. 135.
- (83) G.I. Gurdjieff *Transcripts of Gurdjieff's Meetings 1941-1946* (London: Book Studio, 2009), p. 135.
- (84) Joseph Azize *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 201.
- (85) G.I. Gurdjieff *Gurdjieff's Early Talks 1914-1931* (London: Book Studio, 2014), p. 415.
- (86) A complete description of the exercise is recorded in G.I. Gurdjieff *Gurdjieff's Early Talks 1914-1931* (London: Book Studio, 2014, pp. 416-417) and in Joseph Azize *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020, pp. 231-233).
- (87) Joseph Azize *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 233-234.
- (88) C.S. Nott *Teachings of Gurdjieff* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974), p.114.
- (89) C.S. Nott *Teachings of Gurdjieff* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974), p.114.
- (90) Joseph Azize *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 175.

- (91) G.I. Gurdjieff *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1973), p. 1084.
- (92) G.I. Gurdjieff *Paris Meetings 1943* (Toronto: Dolmen Meadow Editions, 2017), p. 198.
- (93) G.I. Gurdjieff *Paris Meetings 1943* (Toronto: Dolmen Meadow Editions, 2017), p. 200.
- (94) William Patrick Patterson *Voices in the Dark* (Fairfax, California: Arete Communications, 2001), pp. 107-108.
- (95) Jeanne de Salzmann *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), p. 73.
- (96) Joseph Azize *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 195.
- (97) Jeanne de Salzmann *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), p. 192.
- (98) Joseph Azize *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 195.
- (99) Jeanne de Salzmann *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), pp. 150-151.
- (100) G.I. Gurdjieff *Paris Meetings 1943* (Toronto: Dolmen Meadow Editions, 2017), p. 17.
- (101) Joseph Azize *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 296.
- (102) Joseph Azize *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 296.
- (103) Joseph Azize *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 196.
- (104) Solange Claustres *Becoming Conscious with G.I. Gurdjieff* (Utrecht: the Netherlands: Eureka Editions, 2009), p. 92.
- (105) Joseph Azize *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 153.