

## INNER WORK PRINCIPLES I

Gurdjieff taught that human beings in their normal waking state are incomplete and undeveloped from a spiritual perspective. Yet every individual has the possibility of inner development and conscious evolution – we are ‘self-developing’ organisms. Growth and transformation are the result of knowledge, understanding and inner effort under the guidance of a genuine teacher. The ultimate aim is to become a conscious vehicle for the force of evolution.

The goal of spiritual development is to raise the level of our consciousness and being, and awaken our latent powers and possibilities. But most people lack a stable and unified consciousness. Only by removing the obstacles that prevent the proper functioning of the ‘human machine’ can we develop and fulfil our full potential as awakened human beings. P.D. Ouspensky: “With right methods and the right efforts, man can acquire control of consciousness, and can become conscious of himself, with all that implies. And what it implies we in our present state do not even imagine.” (1) In *The Psychology of Man’s Possible Evolution*, Ouspensky writes:

Man as we know him *is not a completed being*; that nature develops him only up to a certain point and then leaves him to develop further, *by his own* efforts and devices, or to live and die such as he was born, or to degenerate and lose capacity for development. Evolution of man in this case will mean the development of certain *inner* qualities and features which usually remain undeveloped, *and cannot develop by themselves*. Experience and observation show that this development is possible only in certain definite conditions, with efforts of a certain kind on the part of man himself, and with *sufficient help* from those who began similar work before and have already attained a certain degree of development, or *at least* a certain knowledge of methods. We must start with the idea that without efforts evolution is impossible; without help, it is also impossible. (2)

One of the principal aims of inner work is to become free of both conditioned inner reactions and the ceaseless influences and stimuli originating from the external world, i.e., to cease being a mechanical ‘human machine.’ Spiritual evolution is the result of conscious efforts, a real change of being, the creation of inner unity and the formation of an indivisible permanent ‘I.’ A higher degree of development is manifested as inner freedom, consciousness, directed will, the growth of essence, the ability to ‘do’ and true individuality.

Inner developmental work is a noble undertaking, dedicated to self-realization and service to humanity and all of creation. The aim is to attain self-consciousness and a measure of objective reason, ultimately relating our actions to purposeful conduct and altruistic service to others. The maturation of our inner essence into a conscious, responsible being independent of conditioned responses and actions, and working for the

greater good of humanity, emerges from a confrontation between our “lower” and our “higher” natures:

A person who is on the road to truth is one who has begun to open his eyes to his situation, to feel that he is always pulled out of himself, to see his poverty, his weakness. And after having struggled, been sincere, worked on himself, tried to remember himself and be present to himself, then he begins to enter into contact with his true nature, and he discovers the greatness of the potential that has been given him. At the same time, he sees how strong the automatisms are that continually turn him away from this potential, and finds that with his ordinary means he is powerless. In order to open to his being, he needs to open to these higher influences from which he has been cut off until now. Then he understands that every thinking man should have to become a conscious, responsible being, capable of doing – which means to act from one’s own initiative, an initiative that doesn’t come from the suggestions and appetites of ordinary life, but from his being; a being which calls him to allow these influences from a higher level to operate in him. This is what his “being-duty” is; and it concerns not only himself, but the whole world. (3)

### **Inner Development and Evolution**

Book knowledge provides useful information about inner transformation and may create the motivation for further comprehensive work. But only direct perception of oneself and reality can foster spiritual awakening. Although books may help guide our search, they can never substitute for personal experience and verification: “Ideas are necessary, but they are not sufficient. Direct knowledge is needed . . . The ordinary mind must be absolutely quiet; only then can the higher mind be related with the body. This requires attention, active attention.” (4)

Inner work is a practical and applied psychology comprising a precise method of self-study for the purpose of spiritual development. The ideas and methodology are to be accepted only provisionally and must be tested personally by each student and confirmed intellectually, emotionally and practically, through direct experience.

The work of inner transformation is centered in the present moment, not the past or future. Maurice Nicoll emphasizes this important point: “A higher level of being lies immediately above all of us at this very moment. It does not lie in the future of time but in ourselves at this very moment, *now*. All work on oneself – stopping negative emotions, self-remembering, not being identified, not making accounts – is concerned with a certain action that can take place in oneself at this moment, now, if one tries for more consciousness and remembers what it is we are trying to do in this work. The work is about a certain transformation of the instant, of the moment, of the present, through the action of the Work.” (5)

The science of spiritual transformation is a conscious endeavour which requires years of study and practice before it bears fruit. Ouspensky's student Robert de Ropp: "The Work is both an art and a science. It is creative, and in this sense, is analogous to the work of a craftsman, an artist or a builder. But it is also exploratory, analogous to the work of a research scientist." (6)

Progress is gradual and step by step, rather than sudden and dramatic. Many students have an inflated belief that they can either skip stages ("taking the tenth step before they take the first"), or an exaggerated assessment of their own possibilities or importance (7). Gurdjieff told his students: "He who goes slow goes far." In his essay "Footnote to the Gurdjieff Literature," Michel de Salzman emphasizes the importance of completing one stage of the path before moving on to the next:

This inner process obeys laws and develops in stages that are precise. One of the particularities of Gurdjieff's teaching is the noteworthy emphasis on the importance of the first phase of harmonizing the functions and acquiring a center of gravity of the individual presence. The definite and complete realization of this phase Gurdjieff named 'self-consciousness.' He pointed out that it was the normal and primordial state, which modern man finds himself very far from, but which he ought *naturally* to wish for and be able to attain. He was merciless in not allowing [his pupils] to dream of other, distant possibilities before having worked thoroughly toward actualizing this one. (8)

The development of consciousness and being passes through a number of well-known stages. Gurdjieff's French pupil Solange Claustres: "Each person develops in this work according to their own possibilities, tenacity, honesty, objective observation of themselves, step by step, gradually and progressively." (9) As well, the student does not remove himself or herself from the everyday world of experience. On the contrary, there is a full and conscious engagement with all aspects of life: vocational, social and family matters and situations.

This path of inner growth is sometimes expressed as a 'stairway' consisting of a series of steps in which, initially, habitual patterns of thinking, feeling and acting are observed, studied and systematically removed. This allows the essential self to eventually flower in a state of choiceless awareness. "This process develops from the growing knowledge and conviction that arise naturally from a practice of non-judgmental self-observation. To begin the essential separation of true from false in one's thoughts, feelings and actions, the first need is to establish the inner presence of silent witness – simply to watch the ebb and flow of personal experience without comment, in a manner very similar to the Buddhist practice of mindfulness." (10)

The transformation of a human being only begins when the centers from which stem movements, thoughts, and feelings, cease to produce spasmodic and erratic bursts of energy and begin to function harmoniously together. Then, for the first time, a new quality appears, called "presence." As the intensity of presence rises, the matrix of our reactions and desires, which we

call the ego, gradually become elastic and transparent, and a new space is formed in which a true individuality can arise. However, we cannot transform ourselves alone. We are locked within the pattern of our conditioning . . . We need help. A teacher is indispensable. Gurdjieff's teaching works on all the aspects of the psyche simultaneously: on the mind, the feelings, and the body. (11)

One of the goals of self-transformation is to actualize a higher level of consciousness and being as part of an evolutionary cosmic process. Only then can one live in harmony with both our earthly life and the greater universe. Robert de Ropp:

Man, whose ultimate inner transformation can be compared to the change from caterpillar to butterfly, is forced to rely entirely on his own intentional efforts to being about this metamorphosis. Nature not only fails to help him but also places great obstacles in his way. If he wants to attain his full development and awaken the higher centers in his brain, he must work against nature at one level in order to serve her purposes at a higher level. Processes taking place at one level may be opposed to those taking place at another . . . The processes we call nature operate at several levels and man is placed between two levels of the cosmic process. He has the possibility of transcending himself and attaining a higher level of being, or he can remain as he is. (12)

The ultimate purpose of inner work is to develop our inner being and create a direct connection with the energies and forces of the cosmos (13). This allows one to open to a finer, subtler quality of existence and relate with something higher than ordinary life. However, this is only possible if a balance has been created between the lower centers – thinking, feeling and instinctive-moving – to allow access to the higher emotional and higher intellectual centers, which resonate with the higher cosmic vibrations or energies. In *The Reality of Being*, Jeanne de Salzmann describes this process:

On a cosmic scale, man plays an important role on the earth. Without him certain forces cannot act and cannot maintain an equilibrium. But we do not see this, we do not know it and consequently we do not produce the force that could create a relation with other cosmic energies in ourselves. What is necessary, in us and around us, is the creation of a certain level of energy, an attention that resists surrounding influences and does not let itself deteriorate. Then it has to receive a force that is more active, that will allow it not only to resist but to have an action and find a stable place between two currents of different levels. This possibility of equilibrium is the continuing challenge, the interval to be faced every moment in the work for consciousness. (14)

### **Gurdjieff and 'the Work'**

The ancient Fourth Way teaching of self-development that Gurdjieff brought to the West, which eventually became known as 'the Work,' was appropriate for the needs and cultural environment of the time. His approach was eminently practical and can rightfully

be called both a science (objective self-study) and an art (conscious living). His advice to students captures both elements of the teaching: “Work as an artisan out of love for the work and not for the result.”

Like traditional teachings, the Fourth Way was rooted in Tradition, yet, uniquely, It both appeared and disappeared. By thus avoiding a stultifying monolithic structure, it was free to take on a form corresponding with the time. Whatever form it might take, its principles remained unchanged. Rather than withdraw into a monastery or an ashram, the student of the Fourth Way stayed in life, learned to use life – use the uncertainty, shocks, suffering and negativity it produced – to come to real life. One learned to put energy and faith only in consciousness and direct experience. Every idea and practice was to be verified by one’s own intentional observation and experimentation. What was necessary was not devotion but effort; not belief, but self-study, self-sacrifice and understanding. And the effort had to be voluntary. It was not an effort made by the willful ego, but an effort of a special quality, one both psychological and organic, the aim being to impartially observe one’s manifestations. In turn, this observation of self *as it is* – not as *imagined* – brings a genuine suffering, also of a different quality (unlike personal psychological, emotional or physical suffering). It is a suffering that only the seeing of the stark impersonal truth can evoke. It is only the intentional self-remembering and self-observation, repeated again and again, which can build sufficient pressure to crack the imprisoning shell of false personality, so that essence can develop and higher-being bodies be formed and a soul created. (15)

According to Gurdjieff, the aim of his teaching was to develop and acquire unity or true individuality, the capacity to *do*, permanent I, will, and self-consciousness. But, almost all individuals falsely believe that they already possess these attributes, when in fact they do not. Only sustained self-observation will dissuade one of this belief.

The Work ideas were initially presented theoretically, but eventually they must be applied practically in all situations and circumstances of life. The teaching was given in fragments, sometimes in unexpected ways, so that the students were required to connect the various ideas through their own observations and experiences. C.S. Nott, an early student of Gurdjieff, acknowledged the challenge of this approach: “Gurdjieff’s system provides technique. His system has a method not taught in books, by which you can learn little by little how to make this effort to know yourself, but you must be prepared to work for a long time – for years perhaps – and there will be long periods when nothing seems to happen and nothing in oneself seems to change.” (16)

The inner work of self-transformation that Gurdjieff introduced to the West assumed that, because of culturally conditioned beliefs, potential students must start at the very beginning and not further along the path, under the unrealistic belief that they can learn at their own pace and in the way they choose. “Gurdjieff begins at the very bottom: showing his pupils how to see what is wrong in their functions, a study that is to be done properly and thoroughly, takes years. Only then, when one has at last seen what one is, are the

remedies indicated. Once, someone told Gurdjieff that his Work was much too hard. ‘If it was easier,’ was his reply, ‘it would not be the work’.” (17)

One of the essential foundations of the Work is the importance of personal experience and verification of the ideas. Students are told that there must be an objective, scientific appraisal of what, how and why one is learning that resonates with one’s emotional and organic impressions. This is in sharp contrast to cults in which uncritical belief, devotion, and wishful fantasies are held as the bonding element which unifies the believers.

The Work requires discipline, focus and patience. The student must be prepared to follow the laws and principles of inner development, and eventually be able to assimilate the Work ideas into everyday living. C.S. Nott describes these challenges: “Those who can compel themselves to see themselves as they are, whatever the suffering, reap a rich reward – they begin to really live, they become twice-born. The practice of the Teaching, which at first appears easy, is the most difficult thing in the world. Everything is against – both inside and out – the knowing of ourselves, against efforts to be conscious of ourselves. But by following the path and crossing the bridge, a man receives blessings beyond price.” (18) Solange Claustres describes some of the salient characteristics of the Work in her memoir *Becoming Conscious with G.I. Gurdjieff*:

This teaching is a school for self-knowledge and leads us to become conscious of the conditioning and mechanicalness in which we live, and to work to free ourselves from them. There are various different inner exercises, dance-movements, and work on all parts of oneself, with the aim of opening out to a more complete development of being. It is learning to know oneself, and to know others and to help them. Although the teaching is not hidden, it does not put itself forward. One is free to choose to come or go – there is only the wish to understand more, to strive to improve oneself. (19)

Gurdjieff’s Fourth Way teaching is eminently practical, grounded in verifiable facts concerning the human condition and the precise process of ‘work on oneself.’ The first few stages are considered preparatory. John G. Bennett enumerates some of the preliminary requirements:

- Clarification of one’s own aim (“what I wish”)
- Taking stock of one’s own present situation and circumstances (“what I am now”)
- Verifying whether the teaching corresponds to one’s own understanding and potential (“what I need”)

The Work regards life on earth as an opportunity for working on oneself in order to develop consciousness and being. By changing inner states through self-observation and guided inner work, the student can shift the level of consciousness so as not to react mechanically to external events and stimuli. This process of inner development involves the transformation of energies from ‘the coarse to the fine’ in alchemical language (20). Maurice Nicoll describes the psychology of this transformational process:

Life is continually causing us to react to it. All these reactions form our life – our own personal life. To change one’s life is not to change outer circumstances: it is to change one’s reactions. But unless we can see that outer life comes in as impressions which cause us to react in stereotyped ways, we cannot see where the point of possible change comes in, where it is possible to work. If the reactions that form your own personal life are mainly negative, then that is your life. The transformation of impressions so that they do not always provoke negative reactions is then one’s task . . . work on heavy moods, identifying, considering, inner lying, imagination, difficult I’s, self-justifying, states of sleep, and so on is all connected with *transforming impressions* and the results of them. (21)

One of the most important tasks of the Work is the sustained effort to overcome the passive state of ‘sleep’ that prevents the full development and evolution of our potential. This requires a more voluntary attention and conscious presence plus the energy and practical knowledge to struggle against the inertia of our conditioned self:

Gurdjieff brought a teaching of the Fourth Way that calls for conscious work rather than obedience. A fundamental idea is that in our ordinary state everything takes place in sleep. And in sleep we can see nothing. We cannot direct our lives by our own will. We are entirely dependent on influences from outside and enslaved by the automatic reactions of our functioning. It is complete slavery. There is no higher principle, no conscious principle. Man has the possibility to awaken from this sleep, to awaken to the higher, *to be*. The means is the attention. In sleep the attention is taken. It must be freed and turned in another direction. It is the active force opposed to the passive, the struggle between the *yes* and the *no*. This mobilization of the attention is the first step toward the possibility of self-remembering. Without a different attention, we are obliged to be automatic. With an attention that is voluntarily directed, we go toward consciousness. (22)

A conscious effort is essential to connecting with our higher nature. We become truly whole only when we open to all our human possibilities, both lower and higher. In *This Fundamental Quest*, Henriette Lannes tells us that “the Work calls us to greatness and at the same time asks us to open ourselves to the understanding of our fundamental nothingness. These are two opposed ideas and difficult to understand. For as long as we are subject to falling asleep so often, we must face the absence of relation between our latent possibilities and what we are today.” (23)

Within every human being there is an embryonic possibility of conscious development and evolution – of awakening to a higher level of consciousness and being: “There are the moments when we stop inside and we simply look, we attend to what we are and what we know we are meant to be. These are the moments when we live the one question of our being. And these moments show us a way that, far in the distance as it may be, real action is possible, real intelligence is possible, real will is possible.” (24) In her essay “The Search for Being,” Pauline de Dampierre speaks of this genuine possibility:

This “something else” is what is presented as fundamental and unique by all the great traditions and religions which have appeared in the course of human history. And Gurdjieff brings to it a new vision, which conforms to the changes and the possibilities of understanding peculiar to our time: a vision of extraordinary force and extraordinary scope, because while it enters into the smallest details of our modern situation, it also extends into the cosmic plane, into the very process of the creation of the world. Yet it has to do with something simple. This “something else” which should be the aim of every thinking person, and which is the only thing that can make one happy, is *being*, the real being of a person, which has been placed in them as a seed and which is called upon to grow and to play a role in the universe. (25)

Gurdjieff taught that the basis of all inner work is self-sensing, self-observation, self-remembering, conscious labour and voluntary suffering, and what he called the “Five Strivings for Objective Morality.” The latter appeared in *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson* and are self-imposed duties or strivings to be carried out by those who were consciously working on themselves:

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

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

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

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

And the fifth: the striving always to assist the most rapid perfecting of other beings, both those similar to oneself and those of other forms, up to the degree of self-individuality. (26)

### **Self-Study and Self-Knowledge**

The very first step on the path to liberation, according to ancient teachings of inner development, is to “Know Thyself.” But self-knowledge requires a very precise understanding of the nature of this quest and the impediments that stand in the way. In order to see ourselves as we really are, we must first *learn to see*. Maurice Nicoll: “The first aim in the Work is self-knowledge – knowledge of one’s being. Real self-knowledge, as distinct from imaginary ideas and illusions about oneself, can only come from direct and long-continued personal observation of the different sides of oneself. This is why this Work begins with *self-observation*. You must see how you act, how you speak, and what things are in you, in this thing called ‘yourself’ which you take for granted.” (27)

*Know Thyself.* These words which are generally ascribed to Socrates, actually

lie at the basis of many systems and schools far more ancient than the Socratic. But although modern thought is aware of the existence of this principle it has only a very vague idea of its meaning and significance . . . Knowledge of oneself is a very big, but a very distant, aim. Man in his present state is very far from self-knowledge. Therefore, strictly speaking, his aim cannot even be defined as self-knowledge. Self-study must be his big aim. It is quite enough if a man understands that he must study himself, *to know himself*, in the right way. Self-study is the work or the way which leads to self-knowledge. But in order to study oneself one must first learn *how to study*, where to begin, what methods to use. A man must learn how to study himself, and he must study the methods of self-study. (28)

Most human beings are acutely unaware of their own limitations as well as their own possibilities; to a great extent they do not know themselves. Ignorance of oneself lies at the heart of our susceptibility to external influences. We are the plaything of the forces acting upon us. True self-knowledge entails an honest recognition of our defects, illusions and weaknesses. To attain genuine self-knowledge, we must first see ourselves as we *really* are, not as we *imagine* ourselves to be: “The beginning of this process of self-study, of directly experiencing oneself, shows very clearly that most of the time we live our lives in the state of semi-hypnosis which we call waking sleep, the obvious feature of which is that our attention is not under our control and our sense of ‘I’ fluctuates according to which of our various personalities is active at the moment.” (29). Therefore, the initial stage of self-knowledge is an honest, objective appraisal of oneself. Gurdjieff:

The first requirement, the first condition, the first test for one who wishes to work on himself is to change his appreciation of himself. He must not imagine, not simply believe or think, but see things in himself which he has never seen before, see them actually. And in order to see, he must *learn* to see: this is the first initiation of man into self-knowledge. First of all, he has to know what he must look at. When he knows, he must make efforts, keep his attention, look constantly with persistence. Only through maintaining his attention, and not forgetting to look, one day, perhaps, he will be able to see. If he sees one time he can see a second time, and if that continues, he will no longer be able not to see. This is the state to be looked for, it is the aim of our observation; it is from there that the true wish will be born, the irresistible wish to become; from cold we shall become warm, vibrant; we shall be touched by our reality. (30)

The process of self-study and the acquisition of self-knowledge is both an art and a science. Introspection, psychological examination and belief in fixed systems of thought (such as dream interpretation or psychoanalysis) are all inadequate for the great task at hand. Nothing can take the place of the ‘direct perception’ of our thoughts, feelings, sensations and actions in the crucible of everyday life. Only this awareness can open the window to an unmistakable recognition of the conditioning power of their formative influences. “The more content we are with ourselves and our inherited worlds, the more sound asleep we are. It is only when we have begun to realize that there is something seriously wrong with most of human life, including, in the first instance, ourselves, that we are ready to meet a teacher or guide who will be able to help us find out what to do about

it. A wholly sincere wish to awaken will lead to the beginning of an inner separation between the ego-dreaming self and the reality-seeing self.” (31)

To begin to wake up requires a whole new shift of orientation from the seemingly so powerful but actually helpless ego-will to the undeveloped capacity to see ourselves objectively at last. This new step has to be the ability to focus our attention on our daily self-deception. We can begin to become fitfully and unexpectedly aware of what we really look like. We can begin to catch tiny glimpses of just how total our fraudulence really is. When it is possible to keep some small amount of attention free from being totally immersed in whatever happens to come along to seize our energies, we will begin to get a taste of what “waking up” feels like, and this is the beginning of genuine development. Not illusory self-willing, but real self-seeing, which is the start of “remembering who we are.” (32)

Gurdjieff stressed the necessity of knowing oneself before further inner work can proceed. The principal ideas of the Work provide a functional framework for preliminary self-study (33). For this knowledge to be effective and assimilated properly as a Work ‘nutrient’ there must be a simultaneous cooperation of the thinking attention (intellectual understanding) and the emotional attention (sustained interest and recognition of value). Gurdjieff transmitted these transformative ideas through talks, formal lectures, interactions with pupils and written works (34).

The Work ideas and practices can only be understood through lived experience and personal verification. In *Toward Awakening*, French pupil Jean Vaysse concurs: “Self-knowledge is inseparable from the Great Knowledge, objective knowledge. One cannot attain knowledge of this order except at the price of long work and patient efforts . . . What is required is not intellectual knowledge, which, properly speaking is mere information. Such information may be necessary, but is absolutely inadequate in our search. For this search, the self-knowledge we need is above all an inner experience, consciously lived, of what we are, including the whole range of impressions of oneself which one receives.” (35)

If we question ourselves deeply about ourselves and our possible evolution, we see it within ourselves and through ourselves that we shall ultimately have to find the answer. And if we ponder what is the meaning of his world around us, it is again only in ourselves and through ourselves that an answer can come that we recognize to be our own, and in which we can have faith. In addition, self-knowledge has from the beginning of time been fundamental in many doctrines and many schools. Not an exterior analytical knowledge such as modern western science has been pursuing for so long, avoiding all the inner questions or trying to reduce them to purely materialistic explanations, but rather an inner knowledge, wherein, to avoid distortion, each element, each structure, each function, as well as their relationships and the laws which govern them, are not looked at only from the outside, but must be experienced in the whole context to which they belong and can only be truly

known “at work” in that totality. (36)

One of the positive consequences of real self-knowledge is the ability to deal with life situations with greater clarity, wisdom and serenity. There is a sense of responsibility for our actions and outer manifestations when interacting with other people and coping with difficult circumstances.

Deep within the consciousness of every human being there is a ‘something’ that resonates with the ideas of self-transformation: “There is some truth that is recognized and responded to, often with a spontaneous affirmation, joy, surprise and wonder. ‘Something’ in essence, deep in the subconscious, is touched and enlivened by the experience of being ‘present’ to a truth which is both obvious and deeply hidden from ordinary life.” (37)

The power of the Work ideas is a bequest, vitalizing and supporting our voyage of self-discovery. Henriette Lannes:

We have received the possibility of inner evolution: it is a gift. We have received all the energies necessary to raise our field of consciousness to a higher level. If we do not bring enough attention to this possibility, it will be unable to develop in us. We must learn to return to ourselves to convert our energies . . . It is still possible to awaken inwardly. At times we are far from this and at other moments it is as if we come closer. This observation can be a catalyst. The more we distance ourselves from our mechanical associations, the more we come to the possibility of listening, of hearing what occurs within ourselves. We have many possibilities, but we are like a millionaire content to eat a crust of bread. These ideas touch something alive in us. (38)

### **Obstacles and Barriers to Self-Development**

Serious self-study and self-observation over a period of time reveals the numerous impediments which prevent inner growth. Habitual patterns of behaviour are deeply ingrained and often unrecognized, operating below consciousness yet profoundly impacting our thoughts, feelings and actions in many unsuspected ways.

The sciences of evolutionary biology, physiology and neuroscience suggest that much of our reactive behaviour is the product of imprinting and conditioning over a vast period of time as the human brain developed: “The habitual decisions and instant reactions produced by the ‘old’ brain are vastly quicker than the faculties of conscious thought and reason that arise in the ‘new’ forebrain, which often limps along behind, concealing from itself its own ineffectualness and lack of control with a well-rehearsed script of self-delusion.” (39)

The human condition is generally one of fundamental confusion, created by a conflict between the genuinely human capacities of higher reason and

emotion which are constantly overshadowed and interrupted by the flow of instinctive impressions and reactions from the more primitive parts of human nature. The instinctive 'body-mind' still utilizes for its own survival many powerful characteristics inherited from all the organisms that have ever lived on earth. In particular, the ancient mammalian and reptilian aspects of the lower part of the human brain continue to have an overriding influence over the judgment and response to impressions received from the senses . . . Unless these two aspects of human nature and their often incompatible aims and motives are somehow clearly recognized and distinguished, the basic confusion will persist regardless of any aspiration for self-development. This basic dichotomy is not confined to the physical level of human existence but reaches imperceptibly into every aspect of our psychology. The perception of who we are, the feeling of 'I,' is constantly being formed and mediated by automatic instinctive processes far beneath the threshold of consciousness. (40)

Authentic self-development requires both the acknowledgement of the barriers preventing growth and transformation, and the means for overcoming them. Hugh Ripman: "All that we can see in ourselves is what we think, how we feel, and how we act. This is behavior, the superficial surface of ourselves. Behavior follows the patterns that it does because of hidden causes. The time when the real effort to change can be intelligently undertaken is only when we see clearly what these causes are and what can free us from them. This is the time intelligent work can begin, but not before then." (41)

It is quite obvious that no hope of change or of transformation is open to man as long as he is such a prisoner of his masks and his habits. And if he becomes aware of this, the question arises for him of how to escape. Contrary to what he almost always believes, he cannot escape by himself. Nor can he destroy his habits and his automatic associations because they are necessary in ordinary life. But with the right help, namely, by developing another level within himself, which is the level of the observer or the witness, he can learn to discover them, to know them, and to make use of them. In other words, by developing in himself – through a work of the appropriate kind – a different level of being, this different order of inner relationship can be established without which no liberation would be possible for him. (42)

The acknowledgement and subsequent diminution of the barriers to inner work must proceed in careful stages. If they are removed too quickly, the aspirant may be overwhelmed by new impressions which cannot be properly 'digested' and 'assimilated.' Gurdjieff:

The peculiarity of barriers consists of the fact that, having surmounted a serious barrier, a man can no longer return to ordinary sleep, to ordinary life. And if, having passed the first barrier, he feels afraid of those that follow and does not go on, he stops so to speak between two barriers and is unable to move either backwards or forwards. This is the worst thing that can happen to a man. Therefore the teacher is usually very careful in the choice of tasks and barriers, in other words, he takes the risk of giving definite tasks requiring the conquest

of inner barriers only to those people who have already shown themselves sufficiently strong on small barriers. (43)

Certain entrenched behavioural patterns not only waste energy but also prevent any real growth until they are recognized and conscientiously worked with. Some of the major “beauties” (in Gurdjieff’s colourful term) include:

- Inner lying
- Excessive talking
- Internal monologues
- Expression of negative emotions
- Vanity and self-love
- Daydreaming and imagination
- Identification and inner considering
- Multiple changing ‘I’s

Even as the student progresses on the path of inner development, new challenges and obstacles may arise at any time. They can emerge at each stage of development, often without the conscious awareness of the aspirant. Some of the more prominent ones are:

- It is difficult to maintain one’s original aim, intention and enthusiasm over time.
- Impatience and the desire for quick, tangible results actually prevent real progress.
- The intensity and energy required for inner development is difficult to maintain due to ‘leakages’ in our functioning.
- It is difficult to control and maintain one’s attention for any stretch of time.
- One’s power of self-observation is limited and easily exhausted.
- Unless one’s development is a harmonious growth of head, heart and body, it will be unbalanced and incapable of further growth.

Gurdjieff also identified two other significant obstacles to serious work on oneself. The first he called ‘buffers,’ a technical term denoting an involuntary, self-created psychological barrier shielding an individual from contradictions of various beliefs, opinions, sympathies, emotions, ideas, and actions. “If a man throughout the whole of his life were to feel all the contradictions that are within him he could not live and act as calmly as he does now. He would have constant friction, constant unrest. We fail to see how contradictory and hostile the different I’s of our personality are to one another. If a man were to feel all these contradictions, he would feel what he *really is*.” (44)

‘Buffers’ are created slowly and gradually. Very many ‘buffers’ are created artificially through ‘education.’ Others are created under the hypnotic influence of all surrounding life. A man is surrounded by people who live, speak, think, and feel by means of ‘buffers.’ Imitating them in their opinions, actions, and words, man involuntarily creates similar ‘buffers’ in himself. ‘Buffers’ make a man’s life easier. It is very hard to live without ‘buffers’ But they keep a man from the possibility of inner development because they

are made to lessen shocks and it is only shocks that can lead a man out of the state in which he lives, that is, waken him. 'Buffers' lull a man to sleep, give him the agreeable and peaceful sensation that all will be well, that no contradictions exist and that he can sleep in peace. *'Buffers' are appliances by means of which a man can always be in the right.* 'Buffers' help a man not to feel his conscience. (45)

Since many of our thoughts, words, feelings, and actions are automatically controlled by buffers, they must be confronted. In order to awaken, it is necessary to consciously remove buffers through a long period of inner struggle and work on oneself which often results in discomfort and suffering as remorse of conscience emerges into consciousness. As one's level of consciousness and being develops, buffers will naturally fall away. But even this stage of development has serious consequences. Gurdjieff: "Only a man who possesses will, that is, conscious control, can live without 'buffers.' Consequently, if a man begins to destroy 'buffers' within himself he must at the same time develop a will. And as a will cannot be created to order in a short space of time, a man may be left with 'buffers' demolished and with a will that is not as yet sufficiently strengthened." (46) Therefore, inner work must proceed with care and under the guidance of an experienced teacher who is able to prescribe the proper order and appropriate method of dealing with each buffer, so as not to create further entanglements and barriers to inner growth.

The second major obstacle to self-development and awakening is the 'chief feature' or 'chief fault.' It acts as an axis of resistance on the part of the false personality or ego-self. The importance of identifying and struggling against the chief feature is an integral focus of work on oneself, according to Gurdjieff: "Every man's personal work must consist in struggling against his chief feature. One man talks too much; he must learn to keep silent. Another man is silent when he ought to talk . . . A man cannot find his own chief feature by himself. The teacher has to point out this feature to him and show him how to fight against it. No one else but the teacher can do this." (47)

In his interactions with students, Gurdjieff provided some examples of a chief feature. When one student was told that he had *no shame*, he immediately cracked an amusing joke against himself. Another student was told that he tended to argue with others about virtually everything and anything. He instantly replied: "But then I never argue," as those witnessing the exchange broke into laughter. To another he said that his chief fault was that "he had no conscience." Gurdjieff also noted that friends and family members can often see a person's chief feature much more clearly than the person himself. He also pointed out that nicknames often capture the core of a chief feature.

A teacher will create conditions that clearly reveal the operation of the chief feature of a pupil. This is often accomplished by assigning individual tasks or inner exercises which provide the opportunity of struggling against the involuntary manifestations of one's chief fault:

The struggle against the false 'I', against one's chief feature or chief fault is the most important part of the work, and it must proceed in deeds, not in

words. For this purpose the teacher gives each man definite tasks which require, in order to carry them out, the conquest of his chief feature. When a man carries out these tasks he struggles with himself, works on himself. If he avoids the tasks, tries not to carry them out, it means that either he does not want to or that he cannot work. As a rule only very easy tasks are given at the beginning which the teacher does not even call tasks, and he does not say much about them but gives them in the form of hints. If he sees that he is understood and that the tasks are carried out he passes on to more and more difficult tasks. (48)

### **Group Work with a Teacher**

Gurdjieff emphasized the importance of special schools of inner development in creating the conditions necessary for the attainment of self-consciousness, will, real individuality and a permanent 'I.' The methods and operation of these schools cannot be described in books or taught in ordinary educational formats, as they must be adapted for the needs of different people with different backgrounds and are not universally applicable to everyone.

The path to objective knowledge and awakened consciousness requires both direction and support. In *An Unknown World*, Jacob Needleman describes the challenges and struggles which await the novice when he or she begins the journey of self-development and inner growth: "This ever-new and eternally needed struggle involves nothing less than the practice of sacrificing our deep identification with the egoism that over the millennium has become embedded in our nature. The inner work required as preparation for this sacrifice requires extraordinary help and the knowledge of what it really means to work on oneself. [Historically] this is the reason for carefully protected monasteries and authentic spiritual communities." (49)

Study usually begins in a small 'preparatory' group which is connected with other groups distinguished by different levels of understanding and development, which together constitute a 'school.' As the student progresses, they may move to another, more advanced group to continue their studies.

Gurdjieff indicated that there are three lines or directions for the work of a group: for each individual member, for the teacher, and for the Work itself. Each line supports and reinforces the work of the other lines. "A group must work as one machine. The parts of the machine must know one another and help one another. In a group there can be no personal interests opposed to the interests of others, or opposed to the interests of the work; there can be no personal sympathies or antipathies which hinder the work." (50)

As a general rule, individuals at the level of normal waking consciousness cannot find these methods by themselves or evaluate their effectiveness without the help of a teacher. Without proper guidance and assistance, it is virtually impossible to make any steady and meaningful progress in the process of spiritual development:

The acquisition or transmission of true knowledge demands great labor and great effort both of him who receives and of him who gives. And those who possess this knowledge are doing everything they can to transmit it and communicate it to the greatest possible number of people, or facilitate people's approach to it and enable them to prepare themselves to receive the truth. He who wants knowledge must himself make the initial efforts to find the source of knowledge and to approach it, taking advantage of the help and indications which are given to all, but which people, as a rule, do not want to see or recognize. Knowledge cannot come to people without effort on their own part. At the same time, it is essential to understand that man's *independent* efforts to attain anything in this direction can also give no results. A man can only attain knowledge with the help of those who possess it. This must be understood from the very beginning. *One must learn from one who knows.* (51)

The path to awakening is not easy and requires guidance and support in the form of a teacher and a properly constituted group of fellow seekers. Jean Vaysse: "Just as awakening itself, so there are always new obstacles in the way of growth; and the obstacles to the growth of essence are contained in personality. In order for this growth to take place very definite conditions are necessary: precise efforts by oneself and appropriate help from those who have gone before in the way of development. The only place where such growth is possible is in a school where a man or woman can work on the awakening and development of their real I." (52)

Obstacles never cease to arise, and this search, which at first may appear straightforward, opens up finally onto horizons of which a man could hardly have had the slightest idea when he began. To have any chance of reaching his aim without going astray or getting lost, a man needs a guide for the study of himself. Here as elsewhere, he must learn from those who know, and accept to be guided by those who have already trodden the same path. Real knowledge requires a school. It cannot be found in books, which can give only theoretical data, mere information, leaving the whole of the real work still to be done – transforming the information into understanding, and then the understanding into self-knowledge. (53)

Inner work is a highly sophisticated enterprise with precise methods and exercises which require a knowledgeable teacher to transmit a suitable teaching to individuals and groups: "This kind of work must be organized. And it can only be organized by a man who knows its problems and its aims, its rules and its methods, and has in the course of his life had the experience of passing through such an organized work himself." (54)

One of the major attributes of inner work is that to be effective it must be organized under the direction of a qualified teacher: "Only then can it produce the results expected of it. Without these conditions no efforts can result. And it can be organized only by a man who knows its problems and its aims, who knows its methods; by a man who in his own time passed through such organized work himself." (55)

Groups are constituted by a teacher who selects certain ‘personality types’ which can work together and help each other. Under no circumstances can pupils determine the makeup of a group or specify their role in the group. The teacher has the skill to understand what the developmental needs of each individual are and how best to actualize their potential. Jacob Needleman highlights this factor in *Necessary Wisdom*: “The master knows the potential of the student. He knows the inner being that can be realized and brought forth with enough inner work . . . Real spiritual work begins when you can see what you are, without pretense or compromise. The role of the master or teacher is to see and bring forth your potential, which you probably can’t see on your own.” (56)

Each student must remember the purpose of the group – self-knowledge and the development of being – and not be drawn into lesser concerns such as companionship, intellectual stimulation or need for attention and recognition. One’s attitude towards the teacher is critical:

A group came to learn and to work on themselves and to learn and to work not as they understand it themselves but as they are told to. If, therefore, once they are in the group, they begin to feel or to express mistrust towards the teacher, to criticize his actions, to find that they understand better how the group should be conducted and especially if they show lack of external considering in relation to the teacher, lack of respect for him, asperity, impatience, tendency to argument, this at once puts an end to any possibility of work, for work is possible only as long as people remember that they have come to learn and not to teach. If a man begins to distrust the teacher, the teacher becomes unnecessary to him and he becomes unnecessary to the teacher. And in this event, it is better for him to go and look for another teacher or try to work without one. This will do him no good, but in any case it will do less harm than lying, suppression, or resistance, or mistrust of the teacher. (57)

Groups are often connected with an aim or conscious purpose known only to the teacher. The aim is essential as a ‘balancing principle’ to guide each student in their own inner work, although in the beginning of work the teacher’s precise aim is not known to the group members. Once they have understood this aim, although at first only partially, each person’s own work becomes more conscious and durable.

Group work is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. In the Gurdjieff Work, pupils were instructed not to share their work knowledge and experiences with others. This edict had nothing to do with secrecy or depriving others of valuable teachings. It was only to prevent misunderstandings by others who were not yet ready to receive higher knowledge in the full context of an esoteric teaching. (58)

The quest for self-knowledge is arduous, especially when conducted alone. It soon becomes apparent to the serious seeker that guided assistance is needed in the form of a school, group and teacher:

Confronted with the first necessity to deepen our knowledge of ourselves, we suddenly see what an immense undertaking it is – just as large as, if not larger than, the training necessary for our outer life. It is also a long road, sometimes boring, and often even discouraging; and from the beginning difficulties appear. We see clearly that a much longer, more intense, and more exacting work is necessary than any attempts of this kind we have ever made before. It will require methods of which we are totally ignorant. If we want to succeed in this, a much more organized work is needed . . . The first absolutely essential condition is to find a group of seekers interested in this work to whom the knowledge which is indispensable has been given. To find such a group is in itself unusual and difficult. (59)

The main focus of the group is self-study, in which each member adds to the general understanding of all. In a sense, each pupil acts as a mirror for the others. By sharing and exchanging the results of their own self-observation each student contributes to a ‘pool of self-knowledge’ which benefits all members of the group. Here honesty, sincerity and openness are crucial for any authentic sharing of personal observations for the benefit of the whole.

Gurdjieff placed great emphasis on the need for group work. Throughout his teaching life, from the early Russian period to France and America in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, he formed many different groups with different aims and purposes. In each he stresses the *shared* character of inner work: “One man alone cannot see himself. But when a certain number of people unite together for this purpose, they will involuntarily help one another. It is a characteristic of human nature that we see the faults of others more easily than we see our own. At the same time, we see that we possess all the faults that we see in others.” (60)

One sees oneself reflected in others in ways that are impossible to see by oneself. At the same time, one comes to accept the *automatic* manifestations of others as being no different in law from one’s own automatic manifestations. A genuine acceptance of oneself and others is the hopeful result. Work with others is not only a necessity for one’s personal work but, more essentially, it is the heart of self-other relationships which are focused on working with and for the *benefit* of others. (61)

In a group setting, members often reveal negative sides of themselves that would never occur in the circumstances of ordinary life. The interactions of group members with different personalities creates *friction* which can be useful in self-study and self-observation (62). “We can help one another by working to be present – to make every exchange a conscious exchange. Then each is a reminder to the other. This is individual work but also a group work. The Work is self-revealing. So many sides of myself are a stranger to me. Only by being present, observing and not identifying with the content of the observation are these hidden sides seen.” (63)

Gurdjieff's institute, his work with individual students and his group work were all designed to awaken his pupils to a new level of consciousness and being. He once explained the methods he used to accomplish this in stark terms: "I wished to create around myself conditions in which a person would continually be reminded of the sense and aim of their existence by an unavoidable friction between their conscience and the automatic manifestations of their nature." This is the sacred legacy that he left the world. His approach to inner work involved all aspects and functions of the human being – thought, feeling, sensation and action – balanced and harmonized to create a connection with a greater reality, the Self.

### NOTES

- (1) P.D. Ouspensky *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 22.
- (2) P.D. Ouspensky *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 8.
- (3) Pauline de Dampierre "The Search for Being" in Jacob Needleman (ed.) *The Inner Journey: Views from the Gurdjieff Work* (Sandpoint, Idaho: Morning Light Press, 2008), p. 91.
- (4) Ravi Ravindra *Heart Without Measure: Work with Madame de Salzmann* (Halifax: Shaila Press, 1999), p. 65.
- (5) Maurice Nicoll *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff & Ouspensky Vol. 1* (London: Robinson & Watkins, 1973), p. 2.
- (6) Robert de Ropp *Self-Completion* (Nevada City, California: Gateways Publishing, 1988), p. 86.
- (7) There are risks involved with any teaching of self-development as the false personality can corrupt the ideas and practices, turning them into vehicles of egoism and self-aggrandizement. William Patterson offers a cautionary note in his biography *Georgi Ivanovitch Gurdjieff: The Man, The Teaching, His Mission* (Fairfax, California: Arete Communications, 2014, p. 272):

Entering into an authentic teaching of self-transformation like the Fourth Way is like handling a poisonous snake. For transformation can lead in either direction – to understanding and wisdom, or personal power and heavy karma. One must *learn* to be sincere, as Gurdjieff says, work against self-will, and as one verifies the tenets of the teaching, be ever vigilant to any personal elements: "owning" the teaching, and using it to mask, rather than reveal, one's self-love and vanity. The practices seem simple enough, but ignorance of the depth, complexity and interlocking principles that lie behind them make a descent inevitable if one does not have a teacher in the lineage, or is being their own teacher.

- (8) Michel de Salzmann “Footnote to the Gurdjieff Literature” in Jacob Needleman (ed.) *The Inner Journey: Views from the Gurdjieff Work* (Sandpoint, Idaho: Morning Light Press, 2008), pp. 170-171.
- (9) Solange Claustres *Becoming Conscious with G.I. Gurdjieff* (Utrecht, Netherlands: Eureka Editions, 2009), p. 135.
- (10) Gerald de Symons Beckwith *Ouspensky’s Fourth Way* (Oxford, England: Starnine Publishing, 2015), pp. 12-13.
- (11) Peter Brook “The Secret Dimension” in Jacob Needleman and George baker (eds.) *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching* (New York: Continuum, 1996), pp. 33-34.
- (12) Robert de Ropp “Drugs, Yoga, and Psychotransformism” in Jacob Needleman and Dennis Lewis (eds.) *On the Way to Self Knowledge* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), p. 154.
- (13) The process of the transformation is a movement from dispersion to inward and outward integration and unity. In *The Way to Be Free* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1980, p. 170), John G. Bennett describes this organic process: “It is the timeless realization of a *whole*, not a passage from one temporal state to another. The transformation can be conceived and studied as an ascending octave.” He describes these “stages of fulfillment” as follows: (1) discrimination, finding and acceptance of the Way, (2) right attitude and living, (3) realization of the Self, (4) union with the Self, (5) final liberation. He also relates these 5 stages cosmically with Gurdjieff’s Ray of Creation:
- |         |                      |
|---------|----------------------|
| Stage 1 | World 96 (moon)      |
| Stage 2 | World 48 (earth)     |
| Stage 3 | World 24 (planetary) |
| Stage 4 | World 12 (solar)     |
| Stage 5 | World 6 (galactic)   |
- (14) Jeanne de Salzmann *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), p. 5.
- (15) William Patrick Patterson *Ladies of the Rope* (Fairfax, California: Arete Communications, 1999), pp. 2-3.
- (16) C.S. Nott *Teachings of Gurdjieff* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974), p. 33.
- (17) Nicolas Tereshchenko *Mister Gurdjieff and the Fourth Way* (Austin, Texas: Kesdjan Publishing, 2003), p. 46.
- (18) C.S. Nott *Journey Through This World* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974), p. 48.

- (19) Solange Claustres *Becoming Conscious with G.I. Gurdjieff* (Utrecht, Netherlands: Eureka Editions, 2009), p. 131.
- (20) In his talks to students in Russia, Gurdjieff spoke of the process of ‘alchemical transformation’ of coarser substances and energies using the metaphor of a factory as an example: “The work of the factory consists in transforming one kind of matter into another: the coarser matters, in the cosmic sense, into finer ones. The factory receives, as raw material from the outer world, a number of coarse ‘hydrogens’ and transforms them into finer hydrogens by means of a whole series of complicated *alchemical* processes . . . This crystallization of the fine hydrogens would gradually bring the whole organism onto a higher level, onto a higher plane of being.” (P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* New York: Harcourt, 2001, pp.179-180). This refinement process requires inner work of a certain kind which Gurdjieff called ‘the first conscious shock’ (self-remembering) and ‘the second conscious shock’ (work on the emotions).
- (21) Maurice Nicoll *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff & Ouspensky Vol. 1* (London: Robinson & Watkins, 1973), p. 52.
- (22) Jeanne de Salzmann *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), p. 22.
- (23) Henriette Lannes *This Fundamental Quest* (San Francisco: Far West Institute, 2003), p. 122.
- (24) Jacob Needleman *Why Can't We Be Good?* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 2007), p. 249.
- (25) Pauline de Dampierre “The Search for Being” in Jacob Needleman (ed.) *The Inner Journey: Views from the Gurdjieff Work* (Sandpoint, Idaho: Morning Light Press, 2008), p. 90.
- (26) G.I. Gurdjieff *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1973), pp. 385-386.
- (27) Maurice Nicoll *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff & Ouspensky Vol. 1* (London: Robinson & Watkins, 1973), p. 172.
- (28) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), pp.104-105.
- (29) Hugh Brockwill Ripman *Questions and Answers Along the Way* (Washington, D.C.: Fourthway Center Press, 2009), p. 317.
- (30) G.I. Gurdjieff “The First Initiation” in Jacob Needleman (ed.) *The Inner*

*Journey: Views from the Gurdjieff Work* (Sandpoint, Idaho: Morning Light Press, 2008), p. 250.

- (31) Roy Finch “Foreword” in John Pentland *Exchanges Within* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 2004), p. xix.
- (32) Roy Finch “Foreword” in John Pentland *Exchanges Within* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 2004), p. xviii.
- (33) Self-study also has a cosmological aspect, as each human being stands in relationship with the laws and processes of the cosmos. Frank Sinclair explores this important idea in *Of the Life Aligned* (United States of America: Xlibris, 2009, p. 92):

I need to know more and more about what Gurdjieff calls the laws of world creation and world maintenance. I also need to know more about my own structure or nature. How is the human entity constructed and what laws does it obey? We have been constructed with great intelligence, it seems. We were not just thrown together. In some way, behind all this there must be a profound and unknown intelligence. And in order to become more intelligent myself, I need to understand not only how I function, but also how I *need* to function. Through our sleep and lack of being, we are shut off from that central, overriding intelligence. Understanding this work of self-study is a way of bringing me into conformity with that intelligence.

- (34) In his Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man, Gurdjieff accelerated the attainment of self-knowledge through group work, which provided many fruitful opportunities for self-observation. In *Gurdjieff's Early Talks 1914-1931* (London: Book Studio, 2014, p. 269), he writes: “He who can be a conscientious egotist, can be in life not an egotist. To be an egotist here means to regard everyone and everything as something by which to help oneself. Both the cad and the decent person are needed for they can equally serve as a mirror and a shock for seeing, studying and using for work on oneself.”
- (35) Jean Vaysse *Toward Awakening* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 17.
- (36) Jean Vaysse *Toward Awakening* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), pp. 16-17.
- (37) Keith Buzzell *Reflections on Gurdjieff's Whim* (Salt Lake City: Fifth Press, 2012), p. 218.
- (38) Henriette Lannes *This Fundamental Quest* (San Francisco: Far West Institute, 2003), p. 48.
- (39) Gerald de Symons Beckwith *Ouspensky's Fourth Way* (Oxford: Starnine Media, 2015), p. 13.

- (40) Gerald de Symons Beckwith *Ouspensky's Fourth Way* (Oxford: Starnine Media, 2015), p. 13.
- (41) Hugh Brockwill Ripman *Questions and Answers Along the Way* (Washington, D.C.: Fourthway Center Press, 2009), p. 315.
- (42) Jean Vaysse *Toward Awakening* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 130.
- (43) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 228.
- (44) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), pp. 154-155.
- (45) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 155.
- (46) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 160.
- (47) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 226.
- (48) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 228.
- (49) Jacob Needleman *An Unknown World* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 2013), pp. 186-187.
- (50) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 231.
- (51) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), pp. 39-40.
- (52) Jean Vaysse *Toward Awakening* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 62.
- (53) Jean Vaysse *Toward Awakening* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), pp. 17-18.
- (54) Jean Vaysse *Toward Awakening* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 153.
- (55) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 222.

- (56) Jacob Needleman *Necessary Wisdom* (Napa, California: Fearless Books, 2013), pp. 108-109.
- (57) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 225.
- (58) Gurdjieff proffered a cautious warning about discussing group activities with friends, acquaintances or even family members. The danger was taking the dynamics of group work out of context when trying to expound Work ideas to others who lack preparation and serious intent: “The idea of this restriction consists in the fact that *they are unable* to transmit correctly what is said in the groups. By giving their friends *wrong ideas* they shut them off from any possibility of approaching the work at any time or of understanding anything in connection with the work . . . Either people begin to argue with him and without wanting to listen to him expect him to listen to *their* theories, or they misinterpret everything he tells them.” (*In Search of the Miraculous* New York: Harcourt, 2001, pp. 223-224)
- (59) Jean Vaysse *Toward Awakening* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 159.
- (60) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 223.
- (61) Keith Buzzell *Reflections on Gurdjieff’s Whim* (Salt Lake City: Fifth Press, 2012), p. 180.
- (62) In a question-and-answer exchange at a Fourth Way meeting, William Patterson challenged a student who was critical of the unpleasant personality characteristics and manifestations of other group members, as reported in *Spiritual Survival in a Radically Changing World-Time* (Fairfax, California: Arete Communications, 2009, p. 118):

*I notice that when I am with other members of my group, I see their worst characteristics or features. I don’t know how to say this, but I hold them in a kind of disdain. And in that way I see I isolate myself from others.*

There is a difference between “noticing” and “observing.” One is of the mind, the other of self-remembering. That said, you will remember the people in your group as long as you live. You are all going through a self-initiation together. In this sense, they are your brothers and sisters. Their weak and inferior sides are on view here, as much as yours, because that is the initial aim – to unmask our self-love and vanity. The work is to report as sincerely as possible what one has seen. This calls for and develops sincerity, courage, real will. Go beyond the usual way of relating in terms of likes and dislikes and affinity and disaffinity, and value what others offer you in revealing their suffering of themselves in trying to speak the truth of what has been seen.

(63) William Patrick Patterson *Spiritual Survival in a Radically Changing World-Time*  
(Fairfax, California: Arete Communications, 2009), p. 149.