

INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP WORK

Gurdjieff's teaching approach was far different from any conventional educational initiative. It was not static or logically structured; rather it was organic and adaptive. Over the years he continued to develop his teaching, changing the outer forms and inner exercises to meet the needs of his students. But the aim – establishing a permanent 'I' – was always the same. Professor Jacob Needleman: "Gurdjieff always gave his ideas to his pupils under conditions designed to break through the crust of emotional and intellectual associations which, he taught, shut out the small voice of conscience in man. With exquisite and often awesome precision he was able to break through that crust; ways of behaving with his pupils were, in turn, shocking, mysterious, frightening, magical, delicately gentle, and omniscient." (1)

The structure of Gurdjieff's teachings was never fixed or unvarying, as he was constantly adapting the nature and emphasis of his work with students. Thus, as circumstances changed, he reshaped his teachings to accord with the principle of appropriate 'time, place and people.' His senior pupil Jeanne de Salzmann writes:

While the truth sought for was always the same, the forms through which he helped his pupils approach it served only for a limited time. As soon as a new understanding had been reached, the form would change. Readings, talks, discussions and studies, which had been the main feature of work for a period of time and had stimulated the intelligence to the point of opening it to an entirely new way of seeing, were for some reason or other suddenly brought to an end. This put the pupil on the spot. What his intellect had become capable of conceiving had now to be experienced with his feeling. Unexpected conditions were brought about in order to upset habits. The only possibility of facing the new situation was through a deep self-examination, with that total sincerity which alone can change the quality of human feeling. Then the body, in its turn, was required to collect all the energy of its attention so as to attune itself to an order which it was there to serve . . . As Gurdjieff himself used to say: "All the parts which constitute the human being must be informed – informed in the only way which is appropriate for each of them – otherwise the development will be lopsided and unable to go further." (2)

At various times, Gurdjieff employed a wide range of teaching modalities: talks and lectures, readings from his writings, movements and sacred dances, music, work tasks and activities, individual exchanges and oral teachings, group work, inner exercises, meals and drinks, teaching journeys and, even, telepathic transmission.

Gurdjieff's vast psychological and cosmological teachings were specifically adapted to the needs of contemporary Western thinking. Unlike many traditional spiritual paths, he did not advocate a withdrawal from or rejection of everyday life. Rather, he embraced the

challenges and vicissitudes of day-to-day living as “food” for self-study and inner growth and transformation.

Gurdjieff brought us a knowledge of consciousness, a science that shows what we are and our potential capacity, what needs to be developed. It is a real understanding of the energies in us, of their relation in ourselves and with everything around us. He came to bring a teaching, show a way toward consciousness . . . Gurdjieff’s teaching speaks to contemporary man, that is, to someone who no longer knows how to recognize the truth revealed in different forms since earliest times, someone with a deep sense of dissatisfaction, who feels isolated, meaningless. (3)

One of Gurdjieff’s French pupils once summarized the fundamental tenets of his teaching of spiritual transformation in these terms: “conscious effort, intentional suffering, struggle against one’s own negative principle, through the practices of remorse of conscience, relaxation and ‘self-remembering’.” (4) Above all else, he demonstrated its practical application to his pupils’ lives:

Week after week, Gurdjieff interacted with his students – listening, questioning, challenging, explaining, humoring, consoling, demanding, and always insisting on the need for inner struggle. However difficult the tasks and exercises Gurdjieff gave, they were always proposed in the clear expectation that their fulfillment was truly possible. Gurdjieff’s guidance to his pupils gives us valuable insight into the correspondences between his written and oral teaching through several recurring themes: the requirement to become aware of our automatism and the lack of unity between our centres, the obligation to struggle against laziness and the habits of the body, the need to experience the organic sense of ‘I am’, the arousal of conscience through the practice of remorse, and the possibility of the formation of an unchangeable ‘I’. (5)

Gurdjieff’s Teaching Style

Gurdjieff did not convey his teachings to pupils in a traditional manner. In both oral and written works (especially *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson*) he employed multiple meanings, anomalies, contradictions and symbols and to reveal spiritual truths. He believed that myths and symbols could convey certain esoteric knowledge in ways that words could not: “The aim of ‘myths’ and ‘symbols’ was to reach man’s higher centers, to transmit to him ideas inaccessible to the intellect and to transmit them in such forms as would exclude the possibility of false interpretations. ‘Myths’ were destined for the higher emotional center; ‘symbols’ for the higher thinking center.” (6)

Gurdjieff’s early exposition of his teaching was unfamiliar to most of his Russian students. Rather than a logical linear presentation of his ideas, pupils were forced to connect the various elements together to form a coherent whole. Biographer William Patterson: “Though he can be totally lucid and coherent, Gurdjieff often speaks in ways

that seem to confuse. Gurdjieff teaches using declarations without examples, apparent contradictions, hints, and nuances of all kinds, all of which keep the group on edge and create friction. Teaching in this way makes a demand on the group to become active, to inquire, explore, to think and act independently, to take nothing and no one for granted.” (7)

Our ordinary European logical method of thinking makes us inclined to accept everything literally, that is, if we trust the author, we suppose that with every word, he says exactly what he meant. Eastern thought, however, often uses methods of exposition totally different from ours. Eastern authors often do not define their subject as a whole. They are apt to give only one instance of the possible meaning of the given subject or phenomenon without saying that it is merely an instance so that readers are left to understand their words as they like or as they can. Gurdjieff very often did the same thing. (8)

The words and phrases employed by Gurdjieff to convey his teachings range from simple to complex, linear and non-linear with layers of meaning. Student Annie Lou Staveley: “The best thing for the would be pupil to do was to abandon trying to ‘understand’ in the usual way what was said and done, to give up all pretense of being able to relate it to the mishmash of ideas left by conditioning, and to absorb it all, the way a sponge absorbs water or a normal child absorbs fairy tales and myths – no effort, no evaluation, no judgment at the time.” (9)

Gurdjieff’s teaching consisted of theory as well as practice. French pupil Henri Tracol: “It was as far away as it is possible to get from all didactic formalism. With him, in him, doctrine and method formed a close indissoluble union. He spoke of his ‘system,’ and yet opposed all systematization.” (10) In order to bring the theory, the ideas to a living reality, Gurdjieff forced his students to see themselves as they actually were:

He pitilessly shattered all pride and pretense by constantly and mercilessly treading on “the most sensitive corn” of those who came to sit at his feet. He always knew exactly where to “dig in the knife,” creating all sorts of friction and shock waves around him – but not in the way of malice: his aim was to use every happening as raw material, so that each circumstance in life became a lesson. On the other hand, when necessary, he gave away his own life-energy to help someone in need. To those who wanted to learn and spared not their efforts to do so, nothing was given predigested or on a platter: one had to struggle to acquire and connect together the elements of his teaching, and this made what one found truly one’s own. Every hard-won bit of knowledge had to be understood, not just picked up and recited parrot-fashion, or accepted on hearsay, but tested by every possible means. To be effective Mr. G.’s teaching must become an integral part of the pupil, because only then is it his own actual experience – reality, not mere words or only intellectual concepts. (11)

Gurdjieff's behaviour with his students had a conscious, deliberate purpose. By creating emotional reactions and discord, contradictory impulses, and a struggle between "yes" and "no," the pupil was forced to confront their 'mechanical selves' and gain insight into their habitual patterns of thinking, feeling and sensing. In a certain sense, Gurdjieff acted as an impersonal physician treating a patient with a serious illness:

It was a way that did not isolate his pupils from life but engaged them through life, a way that took into account the *yes* and the *no*, the oppositions, all the contrary forces, a way that made them understand the necessity of struggling to rise above the battle while at the same time taking part in it. One was brought to a threshold to be crossed, and for the first time one felt that complete sincerity was required. Passing over might appear to be difficult, but what was being left behind no longer had the old attraction. In front of certain hesitations, the picture Gurdjieff gave of himself provided a measure of what it was necessary to give and what had to be given up in order not to take a wrong turn. Then it was no longer the teaching of doctrine but the incarnate action of knowledge – the action of a master. In Gurdjieff's own Presence, and because of his Presence, one knew a moment of truth and was capable of sacrificing everything for it. It was a miracle, something of a force from a dimension above what we know. What Gurdjieff brought us was the possibility of approaching a higher level of being. By his words, by the relations he established with us, by his Presence alone, he made us feel human qualities that awakened in us the wish to go in this direction. He drew us toward him, toward another level. (12)

Personal interactions with Gurdjieff were more like a chess match than a conventional conversation. (13) At times, he would mimic a pupil's behaviour to point out a personality trait that he or she was unaware of. To disturb the self-esteem of a pretentious young man, whom he called a "turkey-cock pretending to be a real peacock," he began extending his neck, rearing his head and crowing "gobble-gobble." When another student exhibited a challenging expression, Gurdjieff responded, "Why do you look at me as one bull looks at another bull?" He then proceeded to imitate a raging bull by altering the position of his head, the expression of his eyes, and the line of his mouth. The lesson was indelibly received by the surprised and embarrassed pupil.

Pupils quickly discovered that Gurdjieff could "read people like a book." Kathryn Hulme, a member of the all-women group 'The Rope', recounts a typical encounter at Gurdjieff's table: "With more educated eyes, as our understanding stretched, we were able to watch what Gurdjieff deliberately made for us to watch – pretensions and vanities sheared away from the pretentious and the self-proud, like wool of a sheep, in short, the human psyche stripped bare as only this master of the psyche could strip it." (14)

The new arrivals at Gurdjieff's table were seldom introduced to the Rope, but we quickly learned through the master's reception of them which were curiosity seekers and which sincere seekers of his teaching. For the former

he often played one of his humoristic roles exploding mirth around the table, revealing himself as the eccentric old magician they had come prepared to find, precisely as some rumors had depicted him. The serious guests he frequently complimented by attacking them, “stepping on their corns,” as he expressed it, making them squirm and see things about themselves (vanities, prides, mental pretensions they had never realized were part of their makeup). We on the Rope watched with fascinated attention what he had made for us to watch – revelations of the human psyche. (15)

Gurdjieff explained to his students that his teaching was based on *conscience* rather than subjective morality. In a talk to his Russian pupils he elaborated: “We do not teach morality. We teach how to find conscience. People are not pleased when we say this. They say that we have no *love*. Simply because we do not encourage weakness and hypocrisy but, on the contrary, take off all masks.” (16) This may explain the reason for much of his unconventional behaviour and unorthodox teaching methods:

When he assumes this role, the master becomes a mirror in which the disciple sees himself. He caricatures and exaggerates the disciple’s weaknesses, feigning anger, arrogance or decadence when necessary, shocking the disciple who has a long way to go before understanding that the odious character the master is showing him is himself. When he finally sees himself in the mirroring master, many apparent contradictions are resolved; reproaches and bitterness fade away. (17)

When working with pupils, Gurdjieff would often assume a “role” in which he challenged them to overcome their conditioned personality in order to reach their authentic ‘real I.’ In these situations, he was “sometimes agreeable, sometimes very disagreeable – a man one often wished to run away from, and with whom one stayed only because one’s own work depended on it.” (18) Thomas de Hartmann speaks to his own experience during a period in which many of his pupils fled from Russia during the revolution in 1918:

Soon after the Moscow people arrived Mr. Gurdjieff began to make heavy demands on some of them. We often did not understand, but the explanation can be found in the fundamental principle of the Work of this second period: to try to stay with him in spite of all the obstacles and to remember why we came to him. He often said that, in life, great unhappiness or even insults can move people forward. On the way we were following, the teacher deliberately contrives such insults, but under his observation, they cannot bring objective harm to those he is working with . . . In our case the suffering was intentional, to test our resolve to hold to our aim. And the more the person was advanced, the more Mr. Gurdjieff would press him. (19)

Gurdjieff’s teaching style has sometimes been termed “the way of blame” in which he played the role of a ‘crazy wisdom’ teacher, disregarding all normal social conventions and behaviour – reminiscent of certain Zen and Tibetan Buddhist masters: “Gurdjieff had

decided long ago that he would need to be unsettling, at times severe, even unreasonably difficult or offensive when he thought that approach would best serve his students. On the other side, he would give his all to help people when the person and moment called for that. He rarely revealed his motives for acting in one way or another.” (20)

Critics have accused Gurdjieff of propounding a cold, sterile and heartless path of spiritual development. They often described him as a power seeker, a cynic with contempt for the whole of humanity. This perception reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of his true teaching mission: “The way he proposes, the way of consciousness, seems arrogant to the ordinary eye, and he is reproached for not yielding its place to love. In contrast to the “humanity” of the understanding and compassionate master, Gurdjieff is accused of “inhumanity” because he exposes what he calls ‘the terror of the situation,’ and proposes a ‘dry’ path to his disciples.” (21)

It must be emphasized that ordinary language is quite mistaken when it associates the notions of benevolence or compassion with the notion of sweetness. Gurdjieff is less isolated than is commonly believed when he rejects common paths, received ideas, and morality in the ordinary sense of the word. In order to work on men’s minds effectively, he employs humour and bad taste: the ‘way of blame.’ No matter what has been said of him, benevolence, compassion and – above all – goodness are qualities which he developed in himself to the highest degree, while never allowing them to be associated with any useless and harmful gentleness . . . To love the disciple means not to console but to heal them. And the more serious the disease, the more violent the cure. Sometimes, in fact, amputation is necessary. But Gurdjieff is not only a doctor, or a surgeon. He also points men towards paths to wisdom and happiness. There exists the way of life, of ‘popular’ wisdom whose importance Gurdjieff always stressed. (22)

Group Work

In both the Russian phase of Gurdjieff’s teaching and later at the Prieuré in France, group work – in which students of different levels of development and understanding studied and worked together – was the principal method of transmitting his teachings:

He strongly emphasized that guidance was indispensable and that no one individual could hope to attain liberation working alone. A “school,” considered to be a dynamic ordering of precise moral, psychological and physical conditions within which a relatively small number of individuals can interact for the sake of self-development, became the principal form of transmission. Only such conditions, Gurdjieff taught, could allow older, more experienced pupils to pass on their understanding as part of their own inner work, while enabling all parties to take into account the ever-present tendencies to inattention, suggestibility, and fantasy. The Gurdjieff “school” thus represents an attempt to establish a school of

awakening specifically adapted to modern life – with all the tension and paradox that phrase suggests when taken within the overwhelming and omnipresent tendency to draw men and women out of themselves towards externals, instead of calling them back to the sources of the spirit. (23)

Fritz Peters provides a vivid description of group work at the Prieuré in the 1920s in *Boyhood with Gurdjieff*:

The tasks assigned to the students were invariably concerned with the actual functioning of the school: gardening, cooking, house-cleaning, taking care of animals, milking, making butter; and these tasks were almost always group activities. As I learned later, the group work was considered to be of real importance. Different personalities, working together, produced subjective, human conflicts; human conflicts produced friction; friction revealed characteristics which, if observed, could reveal “self.” One of the many aims of the school was “to see yourself as others saw you,” to see oneself, as it were, from a distance; to be able to criticize that self objectively; but, at first, simply to *see* it. An exercise that was intended to be performed all the time, during whatever physical activity, was called “self-observation” or “opposing I to it” – “I” being the (potential) consciousness, “it” the body, the instrument. (24)

Gurdjieff used naturally occurring events and situations to impart teachings to his pupils. (25) At other times, he created situations himself to produce certain reactions which provided “fodder” for self-observation and self-study:

Gurdjieff constantly manipulated people and situations so as to provoke friction, to create negative emotions between them and give them an opportunity of seeing something in themselves. He asked Orage [a noted editor and literary critic] to put into good English a talk that had been translated from the Russian; he then gave it to Madame de Hartmann to correct, and told someone to let Orage know. Orage, when told about this, for a moment looked annoyed, but then began to smile. (26)

Following a serious automobile accident in 1924, Gurdjieff focused on writing and there was less emphasis on group work. But in the mid-1930s he began again to work with groups in Paris, such as ‘the Rope.’ During this period, and later in the 1940s, he did not mix groups, providing each with a different level of inner work depending on their level of development and understanding. Solange Claustres, a member of a Paris group in the 1940s, conveys how he worked with different individuals in the group, tailoring his teaching to their own specific needs:

His teaching was never given through speeches or lectures. We asked questions relating to what we felt, what we had observed of ourselves, to our exercises in becoming conscious. And, following our observa-

tions and constataions he sometimes asked a question to make us more precisely aware of something, guiding our search, through a task or a simple observation which brought us face to face with ourselves. In his words he answered only the question asked, but with an attitude, an expression, a tone of voice, he conveyed something emotionally which ordinary thought could not hear or understand, as with words the intellect and its associative mechanism of thought would have begun arguing and rationalizing. Sometimes he tackled an attitude, a gesture or a word head on. What he said at that moment was not understood right away. You received the shock, you couldn't explain it, or understand it, but it was so true you could not argue, you were disarmed, the usual means of defence were rendered useless. I observed him helping each person individually, with a remark, an exercise, mercilessly hunting down certain aspects of the behaviour of the personality, and at the same time giving out a warmth, stimulating our feelings. All this simultaneously, for everyone. (27)

In order to extract maximum benefit from Gurdjieff's interactions with a group, pupils needed to maintain discipline, attention, clarity of mind and genuine hope: "Gurdjieff was deliberately and often provocative; this was both a principle of his approach to those who worked with him and a daily practice. He set traps. It was an integral part of his method, a means of revealing pupils to themselves in a new, strictly honest light, which they themselves could recognize." (28) Henri Tracol suggested a number of qualities of mind that should shape the students' attitude. His principal injunction was to be open to Gurdjieff but psychologically free and self-possessed:

Never forget what one is seeking from him.
Never lose sight of the fact that he is the master, but also that he is a man.
And keep a tight rein on any subjective reaction with regard to him.
Be always on the alert. Do not let yourself be caught in the traps he sets.
Know how to be open to him without abandoning yourself. Know how to exact from him the Word. (29)

Gurdjieff also taught his students how to transmute the negative energy stirred up by the inevitable tensions between group members for use in their own inner development:

Friction, which is the result of tension, can be of great use if only we can remember ourselves at the moment. At the Prieuré Gurdjieff frequently organizes friction between pupils when they appear to be going through a period of sleep. For example, a pupil, a former army officer, whose way of giving orders was rather peremptory, was in charge of the physical work. He understood much of Gurdjieff's teaching. Another pupil, a young man, not very intelligent, who understood very little, resented being told what to do by the older pupil. There was a clash of vibrations, and he refused to obey. The older one told Gurdjieff, who said, "Next time he refuses, insult him." Gurdjieff foresaw the result. It happened, and so much friction, so much negative emotions, was stirred up that we all had enough stimulus for self-remembering for several days. Gurdjieff said that when

we had a row with someone we should at once use the energy so generated in useful work . . . In ordinary life, in a mechanical way, it is beneficial to be able to use this release of energy in doing something that one has put off doing, even tidying up a room, otherwise it turns to hatred and resentment, or sulking and brooding. (30)

Gurdjieff was acutely aware of the inner state of each individual in a group. When someone was inattentive or expressing their false personality, he could be harsh in his rebuke. But when a pupil manifested inner composure in the face of his provocations he would acknowledge their 'real I' accomplishment:

It used to be said that not to be aware of oneself in his presence could be dangerous. And it was true that those who tried, and came to a place in themselves of clarity or to an inner flash of understanding, were struck by the invariable acknowledgment of that experience by Gurdjieff. A word of recognition, a sudden look of warmth or a muted "Bravo" would bring one up short with the sense of the companionship of the search and the acknowledgment of effort. I never knew, among those who followed Gurdjieff, anyone who having had such an exchange did not treasure the moment or doubted its validity. No sentimentality emerged, no presumption of spirituality, for the ego being what it is, it is recognized full well as the devil who could turn a crow's feather into that of a peacock. (31)

Louise Welch relates just such an episode following a reading from *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* during which she experienced a very fine quality of attention and sensitivity. As she made her way out of the room, Gurdjieff said to her, "You hear it tonight for first time."

This was my first experience of Gurdjieff's lightning perception of another's inner event. From then on it was evident that almost never did he fail to see, and in some way remark, the onset of a change in state in another. He might even murmur 'Bravo!' when for a moment someone waked up to the real world, though there had been no sign that the rest of us could distinguish. (32)

Individual Work

Gurdjieff employed a wide range of methods and approaches to awaken students to a higher level of reality and being. He placed the onus on each pupil to evaluate and verify the ideas he was transmitting to them, even creating difficulties to test their determination and resolve. Thomas de Hartmann: "The teacher, while constantly directing and observing the pupil, at the same time changes his course, diverts him, even provokes him with apparent contradictions, in order to lead him to find out for himself what is true. This is possible only if the pupil has within him the strongest urge to persevere, a burning wish that will not permit him to be stopped by any obstacle." (33) One of his senior pupils, Pauline de Dampierre, describes the relationship between teacher and student:

In order to put the pupil in front of the reality of what he has, what he can expect, what is possible for him, the obstacles, and so forth, the teacher will use all sorts of means. He may be very demanding; perhaps he will show himself as severe, hard, perhaps he will provoke public scenes. And many people will not understand that, but the teacher knows the price that has to be paid, he knows what the pupil has to go through in order to understand; and if one can see through this apparent hardness, there is always a “maybe” to soften the outburst and help him endure it. Or the relationship may take the form of a private conversation, and in spite of the importance of the situation, it may be quite down-to-earth, familiar. The pupil may feel himself completely recognized and accepted, even chosen by the teacher. And there is no reason for that, because he is taking part in a relation he has never known before: a relation of being to being, although the teacher has had to hide himself behind a language that the pupil can understand. Really no one knows what the teacher has to demand of himself so that the pupil will understand something. (34)

When first meeting a pupil, Gurdjieff would often create unfavourable conditions designed to repel rather than attract them to his teachings. For instance, with both P.D. Ouspensky and Thomas de Hartmann, both of whom were sophisticated and worldly professionals, he would initially meet them in a disreputable café frequented by prostitutes. Gurdjieff often placed himself in a bad light to discourage unsuitable newcomers or to test the determination of older students to work and remember their aim despite their teacher’s often outrageous behaviour:

Teachers usually surround themselves with an atmosphere of great seriousness and importance to give newcomers a good impression. With Mr. Gurdjieff it was just the opposite: everything that could repel, even frighten, a new man was always produced. A newcomer had the opportunity to meet Mr. Gurdjieff and talk with him, but at once there was put before him some obstacle to be surmounted. On the other hand, Mr. Gurdjieff never let a newcomer go away empty-handed if he came with real questions and spoke about something that was of genuine importance to them. (35)

He also tried to screen potential pupils by creating obstacles and difficulties for them to overcome. This separated “the wheat from the chaff” – those with a genuine desire for spiritual growth from those influenced by the opinion of others or their own subjective preconceptions:

A man generally lives with a ‘foreign’ mind. He has not his own opinion and is under the influence of everything that others tell him. For example, a man thinks badly of another person only because someone else has said bad things about that person. In the Institute you have to learn how to live with your own mind, how to be active, to develop your own individuality. Here in the Institute many people come only on account of their ‘foreign’ mind; and they have no interest of their own in the Work at all. That is why when a man arrives at the Institute, difficult conditions are

created and all sorts of traps laid for him intentionally, so that he himself can find out whether he came because of his own interest or only because he heard about the interest of others. Can he, disregarding the outside difficulties that are made for him, continue to work for the main aim? And does this aim exist within him? When the need for these artificial difficulties is over, then they are no longer created for him. (36)

Gurdjieff's unorthodox teaching methods baffled many of his students. In order to make them aware of their mechanical behaviour, identifications and negative emotions, he created conditions in which they experienced a roller-coaster of emotional reactions to help them to see themselves objectively: "We often do not know what he is up to or how to take his tricks and turns, including methods of disguise, role-playing, intentional misrepresentations, elaborately staged scenes and demonstrations, and even more difficult to deal with, insults, shocks, and wild bursts of *controlled* temper." (37)

Gurdjieff did not wish to play the role of the traditional guru. Nor could he be simply a counselor or priest. He was on a different level of being from his students, and time and again demonstrated this by his ability to "see right through" them. They knew that he had a mastery and understanding of human behavior which they did not have and could not hope to have without his assistance. If they wanted to have the kind of understanding which he had, they would have to earn it for themselves. He saw it as part of his task to make things difficult for them, to drive them into what he frequently referred to as "conscious labor and intentional suffering." His wisdom could not be communicated directly; it had to be put in a form where it would arise in the being of the student as their own understanding . . . Students might spend weeks or even months without apparently even being noticed by Gurdjieff, and then one day might be given a single word or thought so exactly right that it unlocked their whole development and later was never forgotten. The shrewd man knows how to go to the heart of matters even in ways which may be completely unorthodox. (38)

When Gurdjieff worked with a pupil, he frequently put them in an uncomfortable position whereby their habitual conditioned mental and emotional postures and reactions were confronted and revealed (39). His objective was to expose the 'false personality' of each student, which obscured their essential authentic self. Pupil Annie Lou Staveley: "Mercilessly he showed us 'as we are.' He held the mirror up and one was helplessly exposed in the flimsy combination of notions, prejudices, fragments of conditioning by parents and teachers, as well as hypocrisy, pretensions, featherweight thoughts, and so on." (40)

French pupil Solange Claustres was struck by Gurdjieff's demeanor and presence, likening him to "a samurai, a Zen master, a wandering sage, a very great artist, a grandfather, and in many other roles. He was ever ready for whatever action the situation might require: changing his role, his facial expression, adapting, flowing, with extraordinary art like the impeccable warrior." (41)

He was open to everyone, always, but he never spared aspects of behavior connected with the chief feature of a person's character, with one's personality – attitudes acquired by imitation, reactions rising up and deforming essence. It was on these that one had to “work,” one had to become aware of them in order to be oneself and not a machine functioning automatically – and in order to learn how to release oneself from the prison of repetition. What left the deepest impression upon me was that profound look when he was listening to someone, silently listening with his whole being. Answering with words only the question put in words and, through a particular attitude in the tone of his voice, by a smile, a look, he conveyed to one's feelings something which the ordinary mind could neither hear nor understand – for, had there been words, the mind, with its habitual associative mechanism, would have set about reasoning without a more all-around understanding. Sometimes he attacked someone head-on, clashing with an attitude, a way of behaving, a gesture or a word spoken. What he said at that moment was not immediately grasped. You took the shock, you felt that it was true. You could not explain it or understand it, but it was so true that no discussion was possible and you were left nonplussed. (42)

Through his spiritual force, Gurdjieff was able to temporarily awaken a student to a higher level of being. One of his earliest pupils, Alexander de Salzmann, alluded to such an experience in a conversation with another student, Louise March: “He said that once Mr. Gurdjieff had picked him up and put him above the world where he could see everything as it really is. Then he fell back down to crawl in the earth's dust again. He yearned for the larger view until the end of his days.” (43)

Thomas de Hartmann also reported that Gurdjieff was able to bring a person from their ordinary state to a higher level: “In Essentuki, he told us, ‘I can lift you to Heaven in a moment, but as quickly as I lifted you up, you would fall back down, because you would be unable to hold on,’ and added, ‘If water does not reach 100 degrees Celsius, it is not boiling.’ So in our development we had to reach the boiling point or nothing would be crystallized in us and we would fall back again.” (44)

Teaching Children

Children were an integral part of Gurdjieff's world throughout his long teaching mission, from 1914 until his death in 1949. They included his own children, nephews and nieces, and the children of his followers. He was able to impart valuable life lessons to them through example, conversations, group work, tasks and exercises, play and games, and role-playing. (45) Rather than presenting “facts” and book knowledge, he employed analogies, imagination and practical advice to develop each child's unique potential. At the Prieuré, children were an essential part of the educational fabric of the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man:

Besides his study and teaching, Gurdjieff spent time with children whom he invited to attend Institute classes designed for them. It is noteworthy that a children's section (for ages 4-10) offered classes in music, dance, song, gymnastics, manual work, games and languages which included English, German, French, Russian, Italian, Greek, Polish and Armenian . . . In his own youthful social and intellectual engagements with children, Gurdjieff developed a curiosity that spurred him into adopting other cultural modes and their languages. In short, Gurdjieff played roles and taught the art of self-transformation. Every experience was, in effect, a lesson in acting that can be developed by the coordination of observation and participation. The later instruction of the children about him consisted largely of guidance in these particular skills. (46)

Fritz Peters describes his experience, and those of other children at the Prieuré in the early 1920s (47). He was particularly struck by Gurdjieff's presence and unpredictable behaviour, especially compared with other adults: "With Gurdjieff, we never knew what was going to happen next, and when it did, it was usually exciting and almost always amusing; sometimes he made it a magical world for children; imagine a man wild and wonderful enough to buy one hundred bicycles and make everyone ride them. What child could resist that alone." (48)

The Prieuré was an outgoing, happy place for all children. Whatever torments may have been suffered by residents or visiting adults, were not obvious to the children. We were treated – except by Gurdjieff – as children, and with a good deal of love, affection and warmth. Unlike the other adults, Gurdjieff was the "boss" and, as such, entitled to exceptional behaviour and exceptional obedience. We thought of him as a kind of god – or perhaps an all-powerful king. Despotic, certainly, but also humorous, kind, affectionate, and frequently very funny. More than that – he seemed absolutely trustworthy and, to us, logical and right. If, at eleven, I could have understood what was supposedly taught at the Prieuré, I might have been baffled and confused. Since I didn't, I was only aware of being in a "good" place, with a good man. I had a natural child's respect for his unquestioned authority and for his eccentricities – they merely made him that much more interesting. Also, he was unpredictable which, contrary to popular belief, was not at all frightening. It was far more stimulating than the activity of all the predictable adults. (49)

Gurdjieff described contemporary education as "a factory turning out servants for a social system, when it should be an avenue toward a realization of self." (50) He decried rote learning or the influence of parents and educators in inculcating societal and cultural norms which deprived a child of their own initiative and individuality. He stressed to parents the importance of avoiding influencing their children in deleterious ways due to their innate sensitivity: "In children crystallization is a thousand times more than in you. That is the danger of suggesting something bad to a child whose sensitiveness is a thousand times stronger than yours." (51)

Gurdjieff chided some of the children for their dress. All the boys wore jackets and ties and the girls wore dresses or skirts or blouses. He asked if they dressed like that because their parents were concerned with their appearance. To a positive reply from a child, he said that Americans are obsessed with appearance, both verbal and material. “Do not follow rules your parents give. Make your own rules. Do not identify with roles your mother or father wishes you to play for *their* sake. When you thank someone, thank for what *you* understand, not for what your parents think *they* understand and want you to understand. And, learn the difference between what you need and what you want.” Gurdjieff said that one can learn to want what one needs, instead of needing what one wants. (52)

Gurdjieff was especially annoyed when parents forced their children to follow social conventions that were incongruent with their own authentic inner feelings: “Gurdjieff understood that adults interfere with the young child’s genuine inner experience of gratitude by making them externalize it with words.” (53) In a talk with his French pupils in 1942, he made this point clear:

I always have bonbons in my pocket. When I see a child I give some to it. With a child there is always someone, father, mother, aunt. Without exception they all say the same thing to the child: “What do you say?” Automatically, little by little, the child says thank you to everyone and feels nothing any more. This is idiot thing. This is *merde*. When a child wishes to say thank you to me, I understand it. It speaks a language which I understand. And it is that language that I love . . . People prepare everything automatically, they make children function like bells which ring when one presses them, like an electric push button. One presses one button or the other. (54)

Gurdjieff admonished children to realize that nothing need bother them unless they allowed it to do so. He counseled them to be true to themselves and not automatically meet the expectations of others, including their parents, and not to forfeit their own dreams and possibilities consistent with their own essential self. And sometimes he devised activities involving money to teach a certain lesson or attitude which would be beneficial in later life. Lillian Firestone recalls Jeanne de Salzmänn’s recollection of one such incident:

One day when her young son Michel wanted money to buy some special treat, Mr. Gurdjieff happened to hear the request and said: “Michel, you can keep anything I give you as long as you can add it up.” Michel was eager for the challenge. “Put out your hand,” Mr. Gurdjieff said, and he began slowly laying money in the boy’s open palm. First, there were coins, one franc, two francs. Michel added them up and happily sang out the total. Then Mr. Gurdjieff increased the pace. He added five, ten, twenty franc notes while Michel struggled to keep the addition going. As long as he kept his attention, Michel knew he could continue to count. But as the pace of cascading money quickened, fear of losing it began

distracting him. Faster and faster the notes came until his eyes almost bulged with the effort. When he finally lost count, the game ended with what he had been able to tally. He also kept for a lifetime the impression of that struggle within him of greed and fear – something else was able to observe the battle. (55)

In his conversations with the children of the Prieuré, Gurdjieff also gave them advice regarding certain physiological processes – sleeping, correct breathing, speaking, and dealing with pain. (56) He also encouraged the children to learn to tell stories (“story make truth”) and to play roles as a way of self-understanding through experiment and creative imagination.

Gurdjieff’s advice to parents was grounded in common sense and psychological insight. Louise March: “Mr. Gurdjieff was also opposed to the modern habit of praising children indiscriminately for all and sundry accomplishments. He said that if the child hadn’t worked with a special intent, praise weakened the child’s capacity to make efforts. And if the child had made a real effort, praise was not needed. Find another way to affirm the action, he advised.” In a dialogue with his French students during the War, he offered sensible advice for a common challenge in rearing children:

Questioner: I wanted to ask your precise advice. My little boy wishes to affirm himself more and more. He always says no and he is always opposing. To make him give up, I have two means. Either to speak to him a long time, to reason with him, which is not always possible; or to distract him, to give him a plaything, which is very easy, but which does not seem to me very good.

Gurdjieff: The second is bad and the first is good. Reason with him, using analogies; children like analogies very much.

Questioner: But it is difficult.

Gurdjieff: That is another question. You must do it. The second means you must not use. The child understands very well, it is more intelligent than the grown-ups, but it needs a very simple logic. What it has understood it never forgets. (57)

Louise March, as well as many of Gurdjieff’s pupils who were parents, tried to put into practice his sound guidance about rearing children:

As I tried to apply what I had learned from Gurdjieff within our family, I came to believe that the right education of children is one of life’s most difficult tasks. I struggled to live what I understood to be the fundamental principle of right education: to respect the individuality of each life without imposing my expectations on the child. I questioned, how to teach the children to obey without making too many rules? How to provide activities which challenge their ingenuity? How to protect them from the many automatic and dulling impressions of the modern world? How to help a child to find his or her own interest? How to foster honesty? The list of questions was endless. I learned that it isn’t easy to love even one’s

own children rightly. I accepted the fact that to be a mother is to have a bad conscience. Gurdjieff often said, "For us 'impossible' does not exist." (58)

Gurdjieff's Presence and Being

Many of Gurdjieff's pupils were struck by the palpable spiritual force emanating from him. Kenneth Walker: "To sit near him is like sitting near a power-house containing dynamos. A sense of collected power seems to radiate from a more highly developed type of man."

The more I saw of Gurdjieff, the more convinced I became of my teacher's uniqueness. I had met famous and unusual men before, but I had never come across anybody who resembled him. He possessed qualities that I had never seen before. Insight, knowledge, control and 'being' are the words that flow into my mind when I begin to think what those qualities actually were . . . Of his wide range of knowledge, and particularly of his knowledge of things which could not be found in books there could be no doubt. And the knowledge which he had given us was knowledge of an entirely practical nature, that is to say, it was knowledge which had not to be blindly accepted but which had to be submitted to a practical test . . . It was Gurdjieff's *being* rather than his knowledge which made the greatest impression on me. The word 'being' is a difficult word to define. It is the quality in a 'man' which chiefly distinguishes him from a *man-machine*. It is also the quality which accompanies the change from the waking-sleep of an ordinary man to the level of consciousness of a man who is 'present to himself.' 'Being' is a quality of which other people usually become aware when it is present in a man, but which they usually find it impossible to put into words. We all emit different forms of energy into space, and although I was never told this by Mr. Gurdjieff himself, I am disposed to think that the energies that are radiated by a *conscious* man differ from those which emanate from a man in a lower state of consciousness. (59)

Many other students also sensed the depth of Gurdjieff's knowledge and the force of his presence and being. Annie Lou Staveley: "When I say that Gurdjieff was a teacher I mean just that. It was not what he did but what he was – his expression, his gestures, his tone of voice, as well as the words he said. In his presence one had the sense of being fed a new food for which one had been starved all one's life." (60) Paul Beekman Taylor:

Knowing Gurdjieff personally was an experience that gives a force to his teaching that I cannot put into words. Gurdjieff was at once the exemplar and the denying example of everything he said. He was to me a Dostoyevskian figure, that is, one who reveals the truth by exposing the false. He seemed demonic, but he suggested that though God can play the devil, the devil cannot play God . . . To me as a young man, Gurdjieff was everything, but at no one moment could I be sure who or what he was. He was

an example of all things one could be. In memory he remains the fullest human being I have ever known or of whom I will ever be able to conceive. (61)

A.R. Orage once observed that Gurdjieff seemed to be in two worlds at once, and in his presence no one could imagine wishing to be anywhere else. In *Orage with Gurdjieff in America*, Louise Welch writes:

Orage reminded us that we were in the presence of Being – hitherto an abstract word to most of us. We made efforts to describe our impressions. For me, it was not unlike being in the presence of a great natural phenomenon . . . Since those days I have had the good fortune to be in the presence of great teachers in the fields of psychiatry, Vedanta, Buddhism, Samkya, Islam, Tibetan yoga, and whatever category Zen will allow. Each of them was unique: Carl Gustav Jung, Daisetz Suzuki, Jiddu Krishnamurti, Sri Anirvan, Karmapa – and others who like them exemplify great and universal being. What good would it do to compare them, since each has his own special quality? But to give words to the specificity of Gurdjieff: he was a spiritual giant in whose presence we felt the limitations of our own personal world. (62)

Fritz Peters observed that Gurdjieff had an enormous power over his listeners when he spoke to them, which made a deep and lasting impression:

One of the most important things about Gurdjieff's pronouncements, talks, lectures, or discursions, was the enormous sway he had over his listeners. His gestures, his manner of expressing himself, the incredible range of tone and dynamics in his voice, and his use of emotion, all seemed calculated to spell-bind his auditors; perhaps to mesmerize them to such an extent that they were unable to argue with him at the time. Unquestionably, however many questions might come to a listener's mind when Gurdjieff had finished speaking, a deep and lasting impression had always been made before such questions arose. Not only did we not forget what he said to us, it was usually impossible to forget what he had said, even if one wished to forget. (63)

Students have remarked that of all the 'skillful means' Gurdjieff employed to awaken them to their essential nature, his actual presence and being was the most effective instrument of transformation. They reported that merely being in his presence, if one was properly prepared and open, was itself a source of understanding and benediction. Henri Tracol: "The simplest and most evident was his own presence – the silent influence he exercised on all who came to him, which sometimes assumed a very direct form, as a sort of osmosis." (64)

Gurdjieff's magnetic presence was a call, and a catalyst, which empowered pupils to awaken to their own inherent spiritual capacities and possibilities. The state of con-

sciousness and being which flowed from him was more effective than spoken or written words in furthering their spiritual development. Biographer Roger Lipsey:

At the rue des Colonels Renard, changes in awareness and one's sense of oneself were a matter of vivid experience. Such experiences were among the most potent lessons Gurdjieff offered; they reached far inside, demonstrated possibilities, inspired search and effort. The catalyst was his state, not confined to himself but invisibly radiant and capable of creating a field of awareness for others in which they could explore what it is to be more awake at last. Further, his state was natural to him. He surely had to renew it, but it was in and of the man. It was not selfish, not a display of superiority, but rather a foretaste of one's own best, of one's own awareness taking its first few breaths of freedom. The way opened from there, a way to be traveled by one's own efforts, though in good company. A striking feature of the awareness and emotional depth Gurdjieff made possible for others is that one instinctively felt more normal, more oneself, and incomparably more self-possessed, as if one had been living in a dream and had awakened. In Gurdjieff's practice, awakening is towards oneself, not towards superhuman something; and the human self, the microcosm, is understood to be endowed with possibilities that need a lifetime to discover and nurture. (65)

Some of his pupils sensed that Gurdjieff was a conduit between them and a higher order of reality, enabling them to enter an alchemical process of inner transformation – the transmutation of base metals (false personality) into gold (essence). French pupil François Grunwald was witness to such a process:

He was sitting perfectly upright; an irresistible calm emanated from him. A silence progressively made itself felt, becoming more and more dense; a majestic grandeur confined by no material or psychological limit circulated in the space, inner as much as outer, and established itself in us. One's attention became keener as all sensation of time disappeared. Each one of us, better and better established in himself, in herself, was looking at him. Today I am convinced that what we clearly experienced as an inner majesty did not emanate from his person as such, rather that he was a channel, a way of access to a "higher" which, without the least doubt, he rendered perceptible. His presence was the necessary transformer, permitting the plunge into a vastness, an immensity in which my own thoughts no longer importuned me as they ordinarily do, but withdrew. He offered passage to that inner grandeur, and that is why I venerate him. (66)

In 1948, after nearly a decade, Margaret Anderson was reunited with Gurdjieff. Although older, he still radiated his formidable spiritual power: "There was teaching in all that he did or said, only its form had changed: he was teaching now chiefly through his presence – from his 'being,' he might have said." (67)

Gurdjieff was able to play multiple roles in his interactions with pupils. Yet behind his sometimes bewildering behaviour, there was a core of silent presence and other-worldly being. Frank Sinclair, who in later years became president of the Gurdjieff Foundation of New York, relates his impressions of his teacher in 1948 during a visit to New York:

The most amazing thing about Gurdjieff was that at one moment he was most amusing, but then, as you looked again, he appeared to be in touch with something greater – God? – and with apparently no obvious transition from his role playing. You saw all this in his eyes, turned slightly upward. Everyone felt this other level – of love, divine love. Perhaps this is why we were able to take so many of his shocks and insults. (Later, so many group leaders tried giving similar shocks, but people reacted. That great sense of love that you experienced in Gurdjieff was not there.) (68)

Commentary

The centre of gravity of Gurdjieff's teaching is the development of the quality and level of a person's *being*. This opens up the possibility of experiencing a higher level of spiritual energy and consciousness that exists within the human being and the universe:

There exists a particular Gurdjieffian "atmosphere" in his own writings and in most accounts of his work with pupils, which evokes in some readers the same overall feeling and intellectual intuition that accompanies these unique experiences in life in which the whole sense of oneself, including one's familiar religious sense and sense of mystery breaks down and when for a moment an unnameable emptiness and silence are experienced. The Gurdjieff teaching may perhaps be understood as a journey into and beyond that silence along with and by means of the demand to attend to the ordinary life of ourselves as we are. In any case, this central aspect of his teaching explains in part why at a certain level no comparison of his teaching with traditional spiritualities is possible. (69)

Gurdjieff's unconventional methods and often outrageous behaviour were, in part, a tautological device to prevent "personality worship." Ultimately, it was intended to prepare pupils to stand on their own two feet independent of him:

He never hesitated to arouse doubts about himself by the kind of language he used, by his calculated contradictions and by his behaviour – to such a point that people around him, particularly those who had a tendency to worship him blindly, were finally obliged to open their eyes to the chaos of their own reactions. This shock could be brought about in all sorts of ways – by an abrupt change of attitude, by direct provocation or an unexpected smile, by a redoubling of exacting requirements or a sudden mollifying gesture . . . It is no part of the Master's role to take over the disciple's efforts of understanding; the latter, and he alone, must make it for himself. The shocks, suggestions and situations calculated to provoke the disciple's awakening are there solely to prepare and train him

to do without his master, to go forth under his own steam as soon as he shows himself capable of doing so. By its very nature, the inner search is inevitably an individual matter. The suggestion is put, the call is made. The rest is up to each of us to join in the game. (70)

Perhaps the most enduring testament to Gurdjieff's impact on his students is their own heartfelt words. Paul Beekman Taylor: "My personal experience with him displayed his immense generosity of character. It is usual for me to discover traces of numerous examples of the force of his teaching and ideas on my thoughts and actions." (71) And Dorothy Caruso paid tribute to her teacher with these poignant words: "Gurdjieff was gentle with my soul. From his mysterious and conscious world, he guided it with the kind of understanding he called 'objective love' – the 'love of everything that breathes': and 'it' responded with unlimited trust – the highest type of love there is." (72)

Students admired and appreciated Gurdjieff's qualities as a teacher (73) and were deeply thankful for the assistance he provided in their own spiritual journey. When Solange Claustres met Gurdjieff in Paris in 1941, she was experiencing a spiritual crisis in her life and found in him an oasis of understanding and genuine hope:

He was gentle but firm, putting my possibilities to the test in order to make me understand them, and all the while giving me confidence. That was what I most needed. He was, simply, a human being full of wisdom and common sense toward everyday reality, the reality of life with no trimmings; he was a good and strict teacher, never weak, never unjust, but never letting anything slip by unnoticed, his attention always alert. I never sensed any sort of manipulation or the application of a "system"; his behavior was instantaneous, flawless and faultless – and above all devoid of any judging. He was always inwardly serious, with a smile and a gentle expression . . . He was fully present, while leaving you your complete individuality; but that didn't prevent him from striking you, precisely and with unbelievable force, with a simple look that stopped you in your tracks, catching a weakness at the exact moment it appeared. Sometimes he made a joke or a remark, sometimes he unleashed anger with the force of a storm . . . when you were with him, every attitude, every gesture was very different from everyday life; he made you feel another dimension, another possibility of "being." Close to him, I was at home. There was no longer any fear, any doubt, any question in me, everything was simple and natural. There was no mystery about it; it was simply "living." Everything was wide awake, as though I had found a lost paradise. (74)

Many pupils noted that Gurdjieff's way of teaching the path to spiritual knowledge and awakening was truly unique, especially compared to their own experiences with other teachers. Kenneth Walker met Gurdjieff in 1924 at the Priuré and subsequently studied with P.D. Ouspensky for many decades in England. When he travelled to Paris in 1948 to work with Gurdjieff following Ouspensky's death, he was struck by the sharp differences

in their teaching styles. Working with Gurdjieff was far less structured, more spontaneous, and even ribald:

I was convinced by now that Gurdjieff did everything for a definite purpose. I felt, therefore, that his heavy lunches and dinners were not designed merely for the enjoyment of eating and drinking. They were used for the purpose of jolting us all out of our set routines, and I noticed that the abrupt change in our manner of living was already having a beneficial effect on those of us who had come to Paris from London. We English followers of Ouspensky had become a little grim and rigid in our demeanor, and we were in danger of acquiring what I regarded as being ‘chapel-going expressions.’ In my opinion we had been subjected, for too long a period, to Ouspensky’s rules and regulations, and we were in need for a loosening-up process. No one was better equipped for administering this corrective treatment than Gurdjieff. As the days passed, I noted with satisfaction that the treatment we were receiving was beginning to have a beneficial effect on us members of the Ouspensky group. Our faces were becoming more relaxed, our speech less calculated, and our behaviour more friendly and spontaneous. Gurdjieff had said, more than once, that it was necessary for everybody to know when to be serious and when to laugh. (75)

William Patrick Patterson succinctly describes how effectively Gurdjieff worked with his pupils: “The role he might play, his words, his actions – these were its mere surface reflections. The deep nourishment was in the substance. To identify with his machinations, to be put ‘in galoshes,’ as he said, immediately disconnected heart from head, cut one’s lifeline to the living silence of the real world.” (76)

The teacher trying to trap his students into identification, the students working not to identify. To remain free of their reactions – that was part of the taxing, frustrating, maddening and ingenious conditions Gurdjieff created. The teaching he brought is not a way of devotion but of self-development, of conscience and understanding. What is being developed is *individuality* in the real meaning of the term – one who forges within the integrity to withstand the heat of opposites, the “yes” and “no” that keep one a slave of psychic and vital forces. What Gurdjieff offered was the active manifestation of Divine Love. (77)

Some of Gurdjieff’s pupils sensed a sadness and disappointment in their teacher at certain times, especially in his final years. Jane Heap once expressed such a sentiment in a conversation with other members of ‘the Rope’: “Today he is sorrowing because of us, what we’ve done. We haven’t been able to take enough of what he gives us. We’ve failed him somewhere.” (78) Kathryn Hulme concurred:

It was a thought that had often entered my mind during the year of trying to take enough of what he gave. I knew that we must have failed him, not only when he had roared at us and told us so, but many another time when it had not been worth his while to point out the obvious. And, I thought,

we would fail him again and again, despite all our unrealizable efforts. Yet I believed that some of Gurdjieff's teaching must surely have become a part of us, even organically. So that later, though we might appear to be running wild in forgetfulness, I believed there would always be the warning note from the small inviolate place he established within us to hold the single 'I' we struggled to unify – a place no one could touch, the place to retreat to in times of stress . . . I believed that such a sanctum now existed in the depths of my being. (79)

Many decades later, in a conversation with her close student Ravi Ravindra, Jeanne de Salzman also described a poignant exchange with Gurdjieff shortly before his death. Ravindra records her vivid recollection in *Heart Without Measure*:

Madame de Salzman told of an incident, late in Gurdjieff's life, when she came upon him in a place in Switzerland. He was sitting, looking very sad and discouraged. She asked him: "Are you discouraged because we are not working hard enough? Is there something we don't do? With great feeling he described his sadness as he conveyed to her the immense distance between what was needed and what was being done. He felt compassion for his pupils, as well as his inability to do it for them. Then he waved to her to go and play the piano. Madame de Salzman spoke about this with such vividness and feeling, and with moisture in her eyes, that I instinctively reached over and held her hand. She smiled very warmly, I sensed that she was feeling for me what she remembered Gurdjieff feeling for her – the great gulf between what was needed and what was accomplished. I felt my inadequacy, my nothingness. I saw that I do not undertake what is needed. (80)

NOTES

- (1) Antoine Faivre and Jacob Needleman (eds.) *Modern Esoteric Spirituality* (United States: Crosswords Publishing, 1992), p. 362.
- (2) G.I. Gurdjieff *Views from the Real World: Early talks of Gurdjieff* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1973), pp. v-vi.
- (3) Jeanne de Salzman *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), p. 2.
- (4) Roger Lipsey *Gurdjieff Reconsidered* (Boulder: Shambhala, 2019), p. 204.
- (5) G.I. Gurdjieff *Paris Meetings 1943* (Toronto: Dolmen Meadows Editions, 2017), p. xiv.
- (6) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 279.

- (7) William Patrick Patterson *Georgi Ivanovitch Gurdjieff: The Man, The Teaching, His Mission* (Fairfax, California: Arete Communications, 2014), p. 33.
- (8) William Patrick Patterson *Georgi Ivanovitch Gurdjieff: The Man, The Teaching, His Mission* (Fairfax, California: Arete Communications, 2014), p. 33.
- (9) A.L. Staveley *Memories of Gurdjieff* (Aurora, Oregon: Two Rivers Press, 1978), p. 72.
- (10) Henri Tracol *The Taste of Things That Are True* (Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element Books, 1994), pp. 113-114.
- (11) Nicolas Tereshchenko *Mister Gurdjieff and the Fourth Way* (Austin, Texas: Kesdjan Publishing, 2003), pp. 33-34.
- (12) Jeanne de Salzmann *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), p. 3.
- (13) Henri Tracol provides a memorable example of how his teacher revealed aspects of himself that he was not aware of (*The Taste of Things That Are True* Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element Books, 1994, p. 109):

Mr. Gurdjieff had invited the two of us to lunch in the rue des Colonels Renard, and we found ourselves alone with him – a rare enough event and one not to be missed. I arrived, full of burning questions, and found him so benevolent, so manifestly disposed to listen that I watched eagerly for the first opportunity to put them to him. But the opportunity never came. Obviously he had detected my impatience and so proceeded to play with me as a cat plays with a mouse. He was disarmingly gentle and benign but the moment he sensed I was ready to return to the charge, he ingeniously side-tracked me, either with some malicious comment or a witty anecdote, or by challenging me to detect a specific flavour or to guess the exact quantity of spices used in a certain dish. I was at a loss to understand where all these manoeuvres were leading. My questions suddenly lost all their weight. Never shall I forget his look of amusement as he watched the skirmishes of the battle surging in me, nor my feelings of frustration and distress that were nevertheless permeated by a strange gratitude for this lesson.

- (14) Kathryn Hulme *Undiscovered Country: In Search of Gurdjieff* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1966), p. 78.
- (15) Kathryn Hulme *Undiscovered Country: In Search of Gurdjieff* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1966), p. 97.
- (16) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 157.

- (17) Michel Walberg “The Way of Blame” in Jacob Needleman (ed.) *The Inner Journey: Views from the Gurdjieff Work* (Sandpoint, Idaho: Morning Light Press, 2008), p. 153.
- (18) Thomas and Olga de Hartmann *Our Life with Mr. Gurdjieff* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), p. 41.
- (19) Thomas and Olga de Hartmann *Our Life with Mr. Gurdjieff* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), p. 47.
- (20) Roger Lipsey *Gurdjieff Reconsidered* (Boulder: Shambhala, 2019), p. 26.
- (21) Michel Walberg “The Way of Blame” in Jacob Needleman (ed.) *The Inner Journey: Views from the Gurdjieff Work* (Sandpoint, Idaho: Morning Light Press, 2008), p. 143.
- (22) Michel Walberg *Gurdjieff” An Approach to His Ideas* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 1-2.
- (23) Antoine Faivre and Jacob Needleman (eds.) *Modern Esoteric Spirituality* (United States: Crosswords Publishing, 1992), p. 376.
- (24) Fritz Peters *Boyhood with Gurdjieff* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 10.
- (25) In *Teachings of Gurdjieff* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974, p. 50), C.S. Nott relates one such teaching moment at the Prieuré:

Gurdjieff sometimes took drastic measures to bring home to us how we were attached to, or identified with, our work and its results. Two Englishwomen, keen gardeners, had worked intensely in the flower garden and produced a fine show of blooms. Young pupils – and especially children – were often shooed away for fear harm might be done. When the garden was at its best, they asked Gurdjieff to come and see it. He did so, and it was arranged that everyone else should come too. He looked round, and nodded and smiled and said: ‘Very nice, very nice,’ and went away. That evening the gate ‘happened’ to be left open and the calves and sheep were browsing in the precious garden.

- (26) C.S. Nott *Teachings of Gurdjieff* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974), pp. 54-55.
- (27) Solange Claustres *Becoming Conscious with G.I. Gurdjieff* (Utrecht, The Netherlands: Eureka Editions, 2009), pp. 25-26.
- (28) Roger Lipsey *Gurdjieff Reconsidered* (Boulder: Shambhala, 2019), pp. 16-17.

- (29) Roger Lipsey *Gurdjieff Reconsidered* (Boulder: Shambhala, 2019), p. 16.
- (30) C.S. Nott *Teachings of Gurdjieff* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974), p. 202.
- (31) William Welch *What Happened in Between* (New York: George Braziller, 1972), p. 125.
- (32) Louise Welch *Orage with Gurdjieff in New York* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), p. 91.
- (33) Thomas and Olga de Hartmann *Our Life with Mr. Gurdjieff* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), p. 14.
- (34) 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. 96.
- (35) Thomas and Olga de Hartmann *Our Life with Mr. Gurdjieff* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), pp. 74-75.
- (36) Thomas and Olga de Hartmann *Our Life with Mr. Gurdjieff* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), p. 180.
- (37) Henry Leroy Finch :The Sacred Cosmos: Teachings of G.I. Gurdjieff” in Jacob Needleman and George Baker (eds.) *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching* (New York: Continuum, 1996), p. 20.
- (38) Henry Leroy Finch “The Sacred Cosmos: Teachings of G.I. Gurdjieff” in Jacob Needleman and George Baker (eds.) *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching* (New York: Continuum, 1996), pp. 20-21.
- (39) Michel Conge vividly describes his own personal encounter with his teacher in his essay “Facing Mr. Gurdjieff” in Jacob Needleman and George Baker (eds.) *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching* (New York: Continuum, 1996), pp. 360-361):

I received an avalanche of shocks – not always unpleasant, far from it – and such a supply of energy that I did not know what to do with it all. But something was at work within me. He put us in conditions which turned us upside down. And that was good thing! For how can we get out of the closed circuit we are in without being shaken up a bit? It is impossible. We are forever singing the same old refrains over and over again . . . When the shock is well received, you cannot but be grateful. A whole length of wall has collapsed, and no amount of lecturing could have achieved that. The role of the master is to shake the prisoner’s cage. He takes hold of what you bring him, throws it back at you, and your whole edifice crashes to the ground. Mr. Gurdjieff

always wanted something. He would put it to you in such a way that you wondered sometimes what was meant. At first sight it looked like a blatant pretext – or even bluffing – but that was to make you grasp the problem. He did not want you to identify with him. He would get your back up so that you would not worship him. He always went about things in that way. It was a trick – to arouse anxiety towards himself the better to turn you towards Truth. You must understand the aim he pursued: never to succumb to the power of “the god of self-calming.” No place was left for lying – he wanted the truth.

- (40) A.L. Staveley *Memories of Gurdjieff* (Aurora, Oregon: Two Rivers Press, 1978), pp. 70-71.
- (41) Solange Claustres “The Dessert” in Jacob Needleman and George Baker (eds.) *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections of the Man and His Teaching* (New York: Continuum, 1996), p. 400.
- (42) Solange Claustres “The Dessert” in Jacob Needleman and George Baker (eds.) *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching* (New York: Continuum, 1996), p. 400.
- (43) Annabeth McCorkle *The Gurdjieff Years 1929-1949* (Utrecht, The Netherlands: Eureka Editions, 2011), p. 33.
- (44) Thomas and Olga de Hartmann *Our Life with Mr. Gurdjieff* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), p. 55.
- (45) An informative description of some of the exercises Gurdjieff prescribed for the children at the Prieuré appears in Paul Beekman Taylor’s *Real Worlds of G.I. Gurdjieff* (Utrecht, The Netherlands: Eureka Editions, 2012, p. 129):

Nikolai de Stjernvall spoke of an exercise in attention that the children would play at the Prieuré. Gurdjieff, or another person, would send a child out to a certain spot where he or she was to stand for the count of ten, and then come back and report what he or she had observed. Five or six children would go to the same spot for the same amount of time, and then return and report what he or she observed. Then the dispatcher would tell the children the differences reported in observations. One might be asked why he did not see what another did. To observe well requires attention and memory. Gurdjieff admonished children who seemed to lack attention with the expression “remember your self.” It is curious that no child remembers having difficulty communicating with others during these exercise or during play time. It would seem that in the context of Gurdjieff’s teaching, the various languages of communication never excluded anyone.

- (46) Paul Beekman Taylor *Real Worlds of G.I. Gurdjieff* (Utrecht, The Netherlands:

Eureka Editions, 2012), p. 127.

- (47) Paul Beekman Taylor captures the flavour of Gurdjieff's interactions with the children at the Prieuré in *Real Worlds of G.I. Gurdjieff* (Utrecht, The Netherlands: Eureka Editions, 2012, p. 129):

All the children responded to the power he manifested in the carriage of his person and the thrust of his teaching. No child, as well as adult, who was ever in his presence was left indifferent to his power of being. Children came to him relatively unburdened with interfering social and intellectual influences. They appeared open without reservation, question or distrust. They took him for what they experienced with him. Small children at the Prieuré played games together on the spacious lawn in front of the main house. The practice of stopping his or her motion suddenly prepared one for the more advanced "movements" and sacred dances. Often Gurdjieff would watch the children's play from the steps of the Prieuré.

- (48) Fritz Peters *Gurdjieff Remembered* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1971), pp. 140-141.

- (49) Fritz Peters *Gurdjieff Remembered* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1971), p. 140.

- (50) Paul Beekman Taylor *Real Worlds of G.I. Gurdjieff* (Utrecht, The Netherlands: Eureka Editions, 2012), pp. 16-17.

- (51) William Patrick Patterson *Voices in the Dark* (Fairfax, California: Arete Communications, 2001), p. 145.

- (52) Paul Beekman Taylor *Real Worlds of G.I. Gurdjieff* (Utrecht, The Netherlands: Eureka Editions, 2012), p. 136.

- (53) Annabeth McCorkle *The Gurdjieff Years 1929-1949* (Utrecht, The Netherlands: Eureka Editions, 2011), p. 52.

- (54) William Patrick Patterson *Voices in the Dark* (Fairfax, California: Arete Communications, 2001), pp. 141-142.

- (55) Lillian Firestone "Gurdjieff and Money" *Gurdjieff International Review* Volume IX, 2005, p. 17.

- (56) In 1948 in New York City, Gurdjieff answered a question from a young boy about dealing with pain. (Paul Beekman Taylor *Real Worlds of G.I. Gurdjieff* Utrecht, The Netherlands: Eureka Editions, 2012, p. 136):

One boy, Wim Nyland's son, dared ask how to endure pain. He had had a terrible toothache once and tried to arrest the pain by trying to ignore it.

Gurdjieff replied that one must do the opposite; that is, concentrate on pain. Pain is a language that the body is speaking to the mind. Listen to it, learn to speak to it. Pain demands attention and concentration. It incites the body's recognition of something that is askew and demands collaboration with the mind to get it right. When concentrating on pain all things outside disappear. "Make friends with pain and make friends with inside self."

- (57) William Patrick Patterson *Voices in the Dark* (Fairfax, California: Arete Communications, 2001), p. 145.
- (58) Annabeth McCorkle *The Gurdjieff Years 1929-1949* (Utrecht, The Netherlands: Eureka Editions, 2011), p. 97.
- (59) Kenneth Walker *The Making of Man* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), pp. 131-133.
- (60) A.L. Staveley *Memories of Gurdjieff* (Aurora, Oregon: Two Rivers Press, 1978), p. 72.
- (61) Paul Beekman Taylor *Real Worlds of G.I. Gurdjieff* (Utrecht, The Netherlands: Eureka Editions, 2012), pp. 17-18.
- (62) Louise Welch *Orage with Gurdjieff in New York* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), p. 90.
- (63) Fritz Peters *Boyhood with Gurdjieff* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 114.
- (64) Henri Tracol *The Taste of Things That Are True* (Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element Books, 1994), p. 131.
- (65) Roger Lipsey *Gurdjieff Reconsidered* (Boulder: Shambhala, 2019), p. 198.
- (66) Roger Lipsey *Gurdjieff Reconsidered* (Boulder: Shambhala, 2019), pp. 201-202.
- (67) Margaret Anderson *The Unknowable Gurdjieff* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 172.
- (68) Frank Sinclair *Without Benefit of Clergy* (United States of America: Xlibris, 2005), p. 126.
- (69) Antoine Faivre and Jacob Needleman (eds.) *Modern Esoteric Spirituality* (United States: Crosswords Publishing, 1992), p. 368.
- (70) Henri Tracol *The Taste of Things That Are True* (Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element Books, 1994), pp. 113-114.

- (71) Paul Beekman Taylor *Real Worlds of G.I. Gurdjieff* (Utrecht, The Netherlands: Eureka Editions, 2012), p. 18.
- (72) Margaret Anderson *The Unknowable Gurdjieff* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 192.
- (73) Solange Claustres testified to his acumen as a teacher: “One would have to have been in Gurdjieff’s presence to be able to fully understand his great knowledge, his deep understanding, his benevolence, his love of others, his simplicity. His strictness as a teacher enabled us to think, wake up and become fully developed.” In *Becoming Conscious with G.I. Gurdjieff* (Utrecht, The Netherlands: Eureka Editions, 2009, pp. 26-27), she writes:
- The acuity of his attention incited sincerity towards ourselves, put us in front of our weakness, the very inability to be sincere in relation to ourselves. His attitude, his words, opened up new perspectives for us, our understanding was widened by another point of view or an aspect that we had not seen, putting back into question our judgement of ourselves, of others, of a situation, of our way of living, of life itself . . . I also felt his suffering for others, his sadness before their inability to understand, or wish to understand, but also his joy for a person who was truly searching. One needed to be very watchful to perceive this, as G. gave nothing away; I was always very attentive to G.’s expression and those of others.
- (74) Solange Claustres “The Dessert” in Jacob Needleman and George Baker (eds.) *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching* (New York: Continuum, 1996), pp. 399-400.
- (75) Kenneth Walker *The Making of Man* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), pp. 124-125.
- (76) William Patrick Patterson *Ladies of the Rope* (Fairfax, California: Arete Communications, 1999), p. 248.
- (77) William Patrick Patterson *Ladies of the Rope* (Fairfax, California: Arete Communications, 1999), p. 248.
- (78) Kathryn Hulme *Undiscovered Country: In Search of Gurdjieff* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1966), p. 149.
- (79) Kathryn Hulme *Undiscovered Country: In Search of Gurdjieff* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1966), pp. 149-150.
- (80) Ravi Ravindra *Heart Without Measure: Work with Madame de Salzmann* (Halifax: Shaila Press, 1999), p. 117.