

Gurdjieff - An Introduction to His Teaching

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Introduction

Colin Wilson, one of the most prominent English writers, described Gurdjieff as one of the great minds of the twentieth century¹. Others consider him a precursor of the "New Age" movement, emerging in the second half of the twentieth century²; a father of modern ecology, who first spoke of protecting the environment; a pacifist, who hated wars and violence; an inspirer of a new outlook on the development of man's consciousness and as a citizen of the world.

Who was Gurdjieff? It is difficult to define him precisely. Such common labels as 'philosopher', 'guru', 'messiah' or 'thinker' do not fully describe his role. Perhaps the term "reformer" would best summarise his activities. One could say, with great simplification, that the purpose of his work was to change human nature. He was not concerned with the improvement of man's character, making him more cultured or tolerant. He tried to achieve something much more profound, much more significant - a total change of man's psyche, a change of his opinion of himself and his outlook upon life. Gurdjieff called it obtaining "Objective Reason".

Gurdjieff considered that only a human being who had obtained "Objective Reason" could be called a "real" man. Such a person would possess a profound understanding of everything around him and of the functioning of the Universe. He would have an objective approach to other people, and his behaviour and beliefs would not change under the influence of external circumstances and events. Such a picture describes an ideal human with almost divine attributes. Gurdjieff did not expect that anyone would be able to achieve this level of development in a short period of time, but he wanted us to realise that the aim lay within our reach and that we should advance at our slow pace in this direction.

There have been many leaders, revolutionaries, visionaries, philosophers, reformers, kings, emperors etc., who have attempted to change and improve the life of man. They have tried to do this by changing the social conditions of man, often by using brutal force. Sometimes they were successful, but the changes were never long-lasting, and after their death everything reverted to its original state. They did not succeed because, almost always, they tried to change external characteristics, the behaviour and interaction of people, by applying external means such as education, psychological pressure or direct coercion and intimidation. Even when a very large part of society fully supported the attempted changes, this fact did not affect the final outcome of the improvement process. Even at the present time many people believe that man can be changed solely by education, and that higher education for everybody will solve our problems.

Totalitarian systems in the twentieth century, in a very effective way, used the education of youth to change behaviour and control people, in order to secure obedience to the leaders. However, as we know, they did not succeed in establishing a stable and happy society.

Methods to change man have not passed and could not pass the life test, because they did not go beyond the surface and did not enter into man's unconscious, therefore could not change his nature. What they achieved, and this only for a short period of time, were some changes in external behaviour and relations between people. Even the main contemporary religions such as Christianity and Islam, in spite of more than a thousand years of influence on their followers, failed to significantly improve human nature.

What makes Gurdjieff different from all other reformers of all epochs is the fact that his aim was to help man to achieve the highest possible freedom - freedom from beliefs, freedom from superstitions, from internal and external pressures, freedom from himself. Gurdjieff explicitly stated that he did not want to start a new religion, sect or a new school with a new set of "truths" influencing people, forcing them to obey new gurus or masters. For a man to be completely free he should not be directed by others, he should be his own master. According to Gurdjieff true freedom can only be achieved by developing a higher level of consciousness. Such development of man's consciousness is solely dependent on individual effort and his will-power. However nobody will endeavour self-development unless he is interested in it, sees its necessity and benefits for himself.

One of the main reasons why a man should change is the existence of so much human suffering in the world. If we look at the human race's vicissitudes over the last few thousand years, we will ascertain that human history is an unending story of suffering mainly caused by people themselves. To the cruellest suffering belong mutual mass killings of people during "events" called wars. Wars have formed an inherent part of our history from ancient times to present day. Imperial, religious, conquering, patriotic, ethnic, liberating wars and revolutions, under different banners, caused not only death but also terrible suffering of multitudes of people.

In the twentieth century, wars took an especially heavy toll on human life and resulted in more than 100 million deaths. The twentieth century brought probably the worst kind of killing in human history - ethnic cleansing, whereby women and children were murdered as well as men. Brutal slaughter of the Armenian population by the Turks was the first mass cleansing operation, resulting in the annihilation of a large part of the whole population. Extermination of Jews by one of the most civilised nations in Europe belongs to the most incomprehensible examples of mass killings committed by human kind, and shows that everybody is capable of perpetrating this type of crime.

During peace time the situation is not much better. Even in developed countries, in spite of economic growth, financial security and a high level of education, human suffering is on the increase. This is a result of the growing addiction to alcohol and drugs, and of family breakdown, the growing number of divorces being caused, very frequently, by egoism, greed and seeking more and more personal pleasure. It is known that the possession of wealth will not bring lasting happiness, and increasingly people are dissatisfied with their lives. Many people, especially the young, do not have any purpose in life and often choose the road leading to nihilism and self-destruction. It is difficult to accept that personal suffering is increasing with

economic growth and social development, and that modern education does not know how to help people solve their personal problems and social conflicts.

Gurdjieff saw, and understood, the individual and collective suffering of man and called Earth "a vainly and long-suffering planet"³. He realised that most of human suffering is senseless and could be avoided, but people do not know how to change their hopeless situation. He believed that man is capable of understanding the rules governing life and should be able to control his existence; that man has the potential to create a Paradise on Earth. He was convinced that the human potential is not utilised towards this goal - quite the opposite- it is used to create Hell on Earth. Why do things happen that way, why is man wasting his possibilities? What could be done to change it? These are the crucial questions that Gurdjieff searched to answer.

Gurdjieff believed that man is at the acme of evolutionary development, and possesses mental abilities well above the level needed for his normal life. He was concerned that man is completely unaware of his incredible potential. These possibilities are lying dormant in men and without proper effort and understanding cannot be released and utilised. Modern man is developing his intellect, is gaining scientific and technical knowledge, is improving his standard of living - and this means that he is concentrating on his external development. But what is most vital for him - how to make decisions, how to behave, interpersonal relations as well as his opinion of himself depends on his consciousness; this however remains at a very low level. The level of man's consciousness is not only responsible for wars and other kinds of suffering, but it is responsible for the totality of his life. The entire life of man, including his beliefs, activities and work, everything he has built up for himself, our whole civilisation depends on his level of consciousness. This is why - when Gurdjieff is criticising our level of consciousness - he questions at the same time the very foundations of our existence, viz. our social and political structures, our beliefs and religions, and most important of all - our methods of education. In some ways the Gurdjieff teaching is more radical than the ideas of such revolutionists as Trotsky and Lenin, because its objective is to achieve more profound changes in society.

Gurdjieff frequently stated that he had not invented anything new, but that his teaching was based on the esoteric knowledge that had been in existence for thousands of years. This knowledge is invisible to the average man and is completely misunderstood and disregarded by the contemporary religious and scientific world. Some fragments of the Gurdjieff teaching can be found in several religious and philosophical schools. For example similar knowledge can be found in the Muslim esoteric sect of Sufi, in the Indian, Tibetan or Buddhist holy books, and in the teachings of many eastern gurus.

It is not certain from which sources Gurdjieff obtained his information. Probably from some of those mentioned above, but it is known that he held Christian esoteric teaching in the highest esteem. He believed that the teaching of Christ contained a great deal of esoteric information, but that information was not understood by his followers. Gurdjieff considered that a commandment such as "Love your neighbour" was

the most important, but unfortunately the least practised Christian commandment. He said to his students that in the whole world there was only one true Christian and he was Jesus Christ.

Gurdjieff's teachings were imparted by different methods. During the early period of his activities he used lectures, seminars and exercises. Teaching from this period survived owing to the publications of his pupils, particularly Peter Ouspensky⁴. In the later period the Institute of Harmonious Development in Fontainebleau was attended by hundreds of students, who subsequently started teaching themselves and passed their knowledge to their own students. However the main source of Gurdjieff's teaching and ideas is his work called "All and Everything". The first and most important part of this work is a book called "Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson", subtitled "An Objectively Impartial Criticism of the Life of Man". Gurdjieff said in the introduction that the aim of this book was "To destroy mercilessly, without any compromises whatsoever, in the mentation and feelings of the reader, the beliefs and views, by centuries rooted in him, about everything existing in the world"⁵.

This book in the form of tales narrated by Beelzebub, who is not a devil, but a being with a higher consciousness, provides a critical analysis of humanity. Beelzebub conveys to his grandson Hassein information about humankind, their history, behaviour, customs, religions, psyche, etc. This is intentionally presented as a gaze on our Planet by somebody from outside, somebody who is perfectly rational and not connected emotionally with events on Earth. In this way the development and analysis of man is presented unbiased, but at the same time covers all the topics that are essential to human beings. Gurdjieff opens our eyes to things we have never thought about. Things that are the canons of our life, but so obvious, that it never crossed our mind to question them. For example, his view that people live and act like in a hypnotic trance, that they behave like programmed robots, belongs to one of the most controversial statements. "Beelzebub's Tales" contain profound knowledge and wisdom about the Universe, Earth, humankind, but mainly about the psychology of man. The book renders a completely different look on man than the works of well known psychologists or philosophers. This look is rational, logical, often ironic, but always full of concern about the fate of humankind.

In "Beelzebub's Tales" Gurdjieff concentrates on the analysis and criticism of psyche, nature and behaviour of men. He covers every field of interest to men such as education, psychology, philosophy, religion, love, sciences, beliefs, art, sport, morality, customs, wars and many more. Each critically analysed topic is treated in a very impartial and rational way. Gurdjieff overthrows many myths of our civilisation that originated from the ancient Greeks and Romans; these that have been introduced by thinkers and scientists in recent times. He undermines the canons of our culture, ways of thinking and of our beliefs and morality. He shows that our life is based on irrational and completely false assumptions.

A new version of Genesis is outlined in "Beelzebub's Tales", a version that is very different from the well known story. Gurdjieff shows God in a role that is completely different from the perceptions of all existing religions. He questions the thesis of the possession of a soul, the existence of Hell and Paradise, and

proposes a new outlook on life based on logical and rational foundations. He never had any doubts that all that exists in the Universe is matter, and that all phenomena are material. Everything that is happening in the Universe must obey the laws of nature; there are no miracles, supernatural phenomena do not exist. This outlook should meet with the approval of rational people, who are very apprehensive of fantastic theories and scientifically unexplained phenomena. But there is something above us too, in the intellectual, scientific and spiritual sense. There is a Creator, who is responsible for the birth and existence of the Universe. Gurdjieff's God is all forgiving, all loving, caring about the well being of human kind. Gurdjieff proposes a system that for the first time reconciles the belief in God with a rational scientific approach to the world and thus could build a bridge between orthodox theology and scientific materialism. This could be the most important gift offered humanity, so deeply divided and searching in vain for the truth.

Gurdjieff's cosmology provides satisfactory answers to the questions to which the contemporary religions, philosophical systems and scientific theories are unable to give acceptable explanations. These questions include: Why are we on this planet? What is the purpose of life? Why are the good and innocent, and especially children, subjected to so much suffering? Is God interfering in man's life? What will happen after our death? These kinds of questions were asked from the beginning of the existence of men, and always resulted in endless arguments and even wars. Gurdjieff's answers are very surprising and completely different from orthodox beliefs, but they are acceptable because they are rational, and therefore convincing.

Gurdjieff did not try to popularise his teachings, therefore "Beelzebub's Tales" are not easy to study. They contain very long sentences, often interrupted by digressions. They lack continuity of narrative, have changing plots, with many unrelated descriptions and remarks making them difficult to read. To prevent the wrong interpretation and misunderstanding of well-known words by the reader, Gurdjieff introduces his own vocabulary of more than a thousand words. This also forces the student to concentrate on the contents during reading.

The structure of "Beelzebub's Tales" is very complex and unique. It consists of many layers of action. The first layer is science-fiction like and includes descriptions of Beelzebub's adventures and his journey with his grandson Hassen on a spaceship from the solar system to his home planet. The second layer is factual and contains historic and pseudo historic information from ancient times to recent^a. It includes stories, legends, jokes and quips referring to the life of man. The third layer describes the individual psyche and behaviour of man, his characteristics, mental development and education. The fourth layer includes social, religious, scientific and political activities resulting from the individual psyche of man. The fifth layer deals with the human subconscious and is presented with the help of cosmic myths. The sixth layer covers the Universe and the laws governing it. The seventh layer relates to the All Loving Endless Merciful Our Father Creator. All these layers are not only mixed together, but also intermingle in such a way that an inexperienced student could completely misunderstand the meaning of what Gurdjieff tried to convey.

^a Up to 1920s

The content of the book should be treated with caution, not only because of the difficult style of Gurdjieff's writing, but also because of the quality and the kind of information provided. Many descriptions are metaphorical; some information is totally preposterous if taken at face value. Gurdjieff often poked fun at the credulity, stupidity and gullibility of people and "Beelzebub's Tales" are full of these types of traps. Gurdjieff never intended to make his teachings widely accessible. He believed that people appreciate the truth only then when they discover it with great effort and cost. Therefore he wanted his pupils to find their own truth and their own way of development because only then would they follow it.

"Beelzebub's Tales" has other interesting features. Anybody who reads it receives its contents individually and selects from it what they need. Each person, depending on the level of their consciousness receives this book differently and absorbs different values. Gurdjieff advises students in the introduction to "Beelzebub's Tales" to read it at least three times, and each time in a different way. Every time we read the book different things come to our attention because our level of understanding is changing. Like the Bible "Beelzebub's Tales" is not suitable for perfunctory reading, but should be studied and reflected upon.

To facilitate the readers comprehension of Gurdjieff's ideas, information is grouped in chapters by topics. However this structure causes certain problems because information in some chapters is often linked with information provided in the following chapters. The presentation of Gurdjieff's teachings begins with an analysis of psyche, behaviour and consciousness of contemporary man in the first and second chapters. How man's psyche has shaped his social life is outlined in the third chapter where the development mechanisms of modern social and political systems are discussed and related to their problem areas. The fourth chapter covers the influences of the ancient Greek and Roman civilisations on the formation of modern sciences, philosophy, and ethics. Chapter five, concerned with religions, does not consider theological issues, but concentrates on the origins of religions, on the emergence of our main beliefs and the transformation of these beliefs. The origins and causes of wars, a subject so vital to Gurdjieff, are discussed in the sixth chapter. Gurdjieff's proposed ways of improving man's present situation are presented in the seventh chapter. "Cosmology" (chapter 8) attempts to explain Gurdjieff's radically new approach to the existence and the role of God, the nascent of soul, and the question of immortality. The laws that, according to Gurdjieff, govern the Universe are also briefly outlined in this chapter. Gurdjieff's life story and the history of his movement are given in the ninth chapter.

Relaying all the ideas included in "Beelzebub's Tales" is not a simple task, therefore in this book only the main aspects of Gurdjieff's teachings are discussed. This teaching, although it emerged almost a hundred years ago, is still very relevant, and even more topical now than during the life of its originator. To illustrate the relevance of this teaching regarding the most important and controversial ideas, comments and examples of contemporary situations are added, as well as typical problems and behaviour patterns of people.

Although many people have heard of Gurdjieff, his teaching is practically unknown outside the narrow circle of his followers. Even writers, when referring to his ideas, generally quote from second hand sources⁶.

The cumbersome style of Gurdjieff's writing and his conviction that his teaching is not for everybody are the main stumbling blocks to the spreading of his ideas. The second cause of his relative unpopularity lies in the fact that his ideas were well ahead of his time, and only towards the end of the twentieth century certain fragments of his teaching began to be appreciated by a narrow group of psychologists, who were looking for new explanations of man's consciousness.

Gurdjieff's ideas are so important that their knowledge should not be limited to a small group of the initiated. Gurdjieff opens new doors of understanding of our psyche, activities, behaviour, existence, our place in the Universe and the purpose of life. Therefore the purpose of this book is to make accessible to everyone the main outline of Gurdjieff's thoughts and to enable their understanding so they could be applied in situations of personal need and decision making.

Chapter 1

What is man like?

As it has already been mentioned, Gurdjieff saw, and painfully felt, man's suffering. He called the Earth "a vainly and long suffering planet". It was obvious to him that, in most cases, people themselves were responsible for their suffering. Besides suffering caused by the forces of nature such as floods and earthquakes or suffering resulting from inherited characteristics, the frailty and imperfection of our bodies such as illnesses and death, most of our suffering is caused by the low level of man's consciousness. The worse kind of suffering brings wars and mutual killing of people. Wars, revolutions, terrorist acts are often a result of the aberrant mentality of a small number of people, but their victims are usually average persons, who have very little influence on the origin and development of these types of events. However, there exists a kind of suffering in which we all participate and are responsible for. This suffering results from human relations.

Our relations with our parents, children, spouses, friends, colleagues at work and even our brief encounters with strangers, doctors, officials etc. are the source of endless stress and suffering. What is worse, people often do not even realise the cause of their stress. Freud, in his work on the different sources of suffering, stated:

"As regards the third source, the social source of suffering, our attitude is a different one. We do not admit it at all; we cannot see why the regulations made by ourselves should not, on the contrary, be a protection and a benefit for every one of us. And yet, when we consider how unsuccessful we have been in precisely this field of prevention of suffering, a suspicion dawns on us that here, too, a piece of unconquerable nature may lie behind - this time a piece of our own psychical constitution"⁷.

Gurdjieff realised that the situation of man can only be changed by man himself. He knew that this would be possible only then, when man would comprehend the causes of evil. Understanding these causes should trigger in a man a strong internal need to change the situation, it means that he will recognise that he has to change himself. The change can only take place, when as a result of man's hard work on his self-development his nature is changed. Therefore, the main objective of Gurdjieff was to reveal to man his true nature and to help him understand it. He also wanted to show people the best methods of working on themselves to achieve the final aim - to bring the necessary changes about. The first step on the road to self-development is therefore to gain understanding of true human nature - our true nature.

To facilitate the understanding of human nature Gurdjieff developed a model of psycho-physical functioning of man. This model is very different from the models recognised by present science, but in the author's opinion- it describes the functions and behaviour of men much more convincingly than existing theories. This model was very revolutionary at the time, but even now, ninety years after its first

presentation, many of its elements have not been recognised yet, although some scientists and psychologists developed similar concepts independently. Recent publications on the functioning of the human mind show that new theories are converging with certain aspects of the Gurdjieff model⁸.

We start unveiling the Gurdjieff model with the description of the most important characteristic that exerts a dominating influence on man's life, the description of many deeply rooted illusions. These illusions include man's conviction that he is unchanging, possesses free will and is always conscious. The work of the human mind is presented as a result of the functioning of several centres that are responsible for specialised types of activities. Many problems affecting people originate from the wrong operation of these centres. Gurdjieff distinguishes three types of man according to which centre is dominating his behaviour. The primary and unique feature of the model is the identification of four states of man's consciousness, especially the third and fourth states which are not recognised by established Western psychology^a. Because most people exist in the second state of consciousness, the main characteristics of the functioning of men in this state will be analysed. Alas the description of the model of the human psyche in this chapter can only be presented in a very abbreviated form and its main purpose is to show the reader the outline of the main elements of Gurdjieff's teachings. This model could help in the understanding of many problems and the functioning of man.

Three main illusions of man

Most people consider that they are logical and rational beings and hold strong convictions that they are fully in charge of their psychological functions. These beliefs, according to Gurdjieff, are the main obstacles on the road to discovering our true nature and the process of self-development. Gurdjieff was convinced that man's life is shaped by many illusions that determine man's opinion of himself and others. Learning and understanding these illusions is the first step to be taken leading to changes of the nature of man.

The main illusions of the contemporary man result from a substantial overrating by him as regards the level of development of human kind. They manifest themselves as:

Illusion of unity. We imagine that we have one undivided will and one unchanging "I".

Illusion of being conscious. We imagine that we are or could be fully conscious of who we are and what we are doing.

Illusion of effectiveness. We imagine that what we are doing, and how, depends on our choice and the decision of our will.

Man's illusions exist as long as mankind has existed. Bennett expressed this as follows:

^a Eastern psychology identifies higher states of consciousness.

"From the accounts preserved in sacred writings of the trial and tribulations of mankind two, four or even six thousand years before the present, two salient facts emerged. The first is that man has always suffered from delusion as to his true situation and the second is that the form taken by these delusions has changed from age to age. It seems as if man cannot help deceiving himself, but with increasing experience - that we call "science" and "history" - each set of illusions collapses only to be replaced by another set equally as absurd. We call the illusions of former ages by such names as 'primitive ignorance' or 'superstition' and pride ourselves on having destroyed them, not noticing that we have invented another set of our own."⁹

In the West these illusions were dominating humanity until the end of the 19th century. In the 20th century these illusions started to be undermined by a few psychologists, but in spite of their efforts these beliefs are still shaping our opinion of ourselves. We are treating ourselves and others as undivided, unchanging, conscious and effective persons and expect that we and others should be able to behave in accordance with our expectations. The situation is even worse, because we are not aware of our illusions. Bennett explains this:

"Even when we fail dismally in some undertaking, we do not ascribe it to the basic illusions; but to bad luck and the malevolence of others, or at the most to lack of care or insufficient effort or intelligence on our part. The tendency to accept any explanation of human failure rather than admit the basic state of delusion is very significant. Once we have grasped it and seen how universal and how strong the hold of illusion is upon people."¹⁰

Illusion of unity

Normally, if someone says "I", he means his whole person, and takes it as an obvious fact, that this person stays the same. It means that he does not change within a few hours or even years. Although somehow we accept certain changes in us due to the passage of time, this is connected with the gaining of life experiences and the ageing process rather than with the variability of our psychological functions. Ouspensky says:

"The illusion of unity or oneness is created in man first, by the sensation of one physical body, by his name, which in normal cases always remains the same, and third, by a number of mechanical habits which are implanted in him by education or acquired by imitation. Having always the same physical sensation, hearing always the same name and noticing in himself the same habits and inclinations he had before, he believes himself to be always the same."¹¹

It might help to grasp the manifestation of this illusion if we look at the behaviour of man during one day of his life. He is a middle aged man, educated, intelligent with wide interests, working in a large firm in a responsible position and is well situated. He is happily married with two teenaged children.

One day he wakes up in the morning and when he gets up he feels a strong pain in his chest and this starts worrying him. This could be the symptom of a heart attack - he thinks- and this depresses him and puts him

in a bad mood. At breakfast his daughter tells him that she has passed her exams very well and has got a place at University. This is very good news, brings him joy, improves his mood, and his health problems disappear. But moments later he discovers that his wife does not want to go on holiday to the lakes as agreed, but prefers a holiday at the seaside together with her best friend's family. He becomes mad at his wife, because this ruins his plans, but he has no time for discussion and has to rush to work. At work he finds out that his colleague has got the promotion, which he wanted badly, instead of him. In one moment his envy is beyond his control, so he pops out down the road to the local bar where he meets his friend talking to a beautiful woman. She is very sexy and he is immediately attracted to her. He notices that she is watching him and that she likes him, which puts him in an excellent mood. Back in the office he receives a letter informing him that his book, after many delays, has been accepted for publication. He is happy and proud of this achievement, and even chats to his colleague who got the promotion. After finishing work he has an appointment with the doctor for a check up. The doctor tells him that he has high blood pressure, is overweight, and has to stop smoking and reduce food and alcohol consumption. This 'prescription' puts him in a foul mood and he needs a drink. On the way home he visits his mother, who lives alone. She criticises him, makes unpleasant comments about his wife and children, and admonishes him like a small boy. He listens patiently, but becomes very tense and stressed. At home he is told that his wife will be going on holiday as originally planned. Everything looks good and he is in a good frame of mind. In the evening his son returns drunk. He starts preaching about the dangers of drinking, but his wife defends their son. This makes the situation unbearable, tension returns together with a pain in his chest and the morning terror. At that moment he promises himself not to get upset about any trivial problems any more.

It is difficult not to notice that during one day this man's mood and behaviour change several times. Is this very strange? One could say that this is a typical picture. We all, more or less, behave like him. How many times per day does our mood swing from worries to happiness, how many different feelings pass through us within a few hours - from love to hatred, from pride to humility? How many times do we change our way of behaviour depending on who we are dealing with: our spouse, mother, father, children, friend, lover, boss, subordinate, stranger, etc? We play many roles like the best actor. In one moment we are generous, in the other stingy, in one full of care, in the other indifferent, in one subservient, in the other dominating, in one truthful, in the other lying. There is no professional actor, who could jump from one role to the other as easily and quickly as we can and at the same time to be so convincing. An actor has to work very hard to master each role, but we are switching from one role to the other completely unaware of the change, without any effort, work or concentration. Someone, who does not know us, could be astonished by our changing and inconsistent behaviour, but people, who know us well, such as parents, children or a spouse, can easily predict our conduct and will not be surprised at all. For them our behaviour is predictable, but we do not feel that we are acting routinely. Why are we behaving like this and why do we not see our different 'acting' roles?

Gurdjieff explains that man behaves like this because he does not have one, unchanging "I"^a, but many personalities. Man has hundreds of small, separate "I's" very often not knowing about each other, not meeting each other and even hostile to each other, mutually excluding each other or disagreeing with each other. When a man says or thinks "I", each time his "I" is different depending on the moment, circumstances or his state of mind. Sometimes it manifests itself as a thought or desire, another time a feeling, then another thought, feeling and so on. Man's "I" is changing continuously depending on circumstances, people he is dealing with, the weather, situations, etc. Man does not control these different "I's", because he is not aware of their existence, because he is convinced that he is uniform and unchanging, he has one permanent "I", and that he has full consciousness and power over his mind.

The arising and properties of man's "I's" depend on his upbringing, education, family, imitation of others, influences of religions, social group, traditions, etc. Some of his "I's" are more dominating than others and are responsible for our decisions. The existence of so many "I's" in us results in want of our resolution and consistency of our behaviour. Some "I's" want to work to achieve an important goal, while other "I's" revolt against it, do not even want to know about it nor have anything to do with it. A man could decide, for example that he will stop drinking, but he is not able to fulfil his resolution because the "I" that made this decision is not responsible for its execution. For this is responsible another "I", that does not agree with the decision of the first "I" and will not co-operate with it. One weak and vain "I" can promise somebody to do something, but the promising man has to suffer the consequences of this promise and has to pay for it.

Our various "I's" function on different levels. Some "I's" have a limited understanding of life, are poor, inferior, mediocre, vain, envious, and simply stupid. Other "I's" are considerate, clever, richer and thoughtful. Some "I's" are greedy, avid, quarrelling, jealous and lustful, others humble and altruistic. Man with so many different "I's" is not able to control his life. In practice life is directing man and he only reacts upon the events brought by various situations. His reactions are fully automatic and outside his control. They depend on the "I" that is in charge at a given moment. Man can give the impression of being very active and in charge of his life, but in reality he is passive, because he does not control and analyse his actions. Man who does not understand his automatic behaviour is also not able to understand the mechanical behaviour of other people. This lack of understanding makes it very difficult for him to find a rational way of solving human problems and conflicts.

Although Gurdjieff in this context does not mention man's subconscious, it might be easier to understand the origin and functioning of our many "I's" and our lack of awareness of their existence, if we assume that the many "I's" are hidden in the unconscious part of our psyche. Therefore our "I's" could arise, be developed and control us without any participation of our consciousness. This is why our different "I's" are completely

^a ' I ' in this context is used as an independent unit of the man's personality responsible for specific psychological functions in a given moment of time.

invisible to us, but manifest themselves only in particular situations. These invisible "I's" are especially dominating, because we are not aware of their existence.

The illusion, that man is a uniform and unchanging person, originated in ancient Greece and therefore is deeply rooted in our minds. In practice it is very difficult to find any discourse on this topic in Western literature or Christian teaching. The explanation of the behaviour of man using the concept of many "I's" is closer to the Buddhist tradition than to Western psychology. Although some fragments of similar ideas can be found in the works of such psychologists as Assagioli¹² or Skinner¹³.

Buffers

The existence of many "I's" in a man results in the arising in his mind of many contradictory opinions, feelings, likes and directions of actions. These "I's" very often oppose each other, strive to achieve different aims and therefore cause inconsistent behaviour. Such functioning of "I's" could cause substantial stresses and would result in the loss of self esteem, self assurance and would make life unbearable. If a man could realise the existence of all his internal contradictions he would certainly become insane. To prevent this ever happening, man has developed mental barriers, which Gurdjieff calls buffers. Buffers in railway carriages reduce and soften shocks and make them unnoticeable, buffers in man protect him against any shocks resulting from the opposing activities of his "I's" and the consequences of realisation of the existence in him of all contradictions. The buffers make the life of man not only much easier, but even possible. They put a man in a blissful and quiet state of mind. Owing to them he is convinced that his action is right and he does not suffer any remorse.

The buffers operate in our mind as a blockade. They block the existence of the realistic vision of ourselves. They do not allow a man to carry out any reflections, self criticism and self analysis. Men, who are mentally tough and who become leaders have very strong buffers. They are tough because their buffers prevent them from realising how much damage they do to other men. Men with strong buffers do not have any doubts about their values and importance. They are unable to understand their wrong behaviour and conduct, they will never feel any necessity to justify or find excuses for their actions.

The blocking action of buffers can be seen by observing the attitude of people to their own health. We all have a strong "I" taking care of our health and protecting our lives. Even when we do not feel very well we try everything to get better. Normally we are concerned about our health and we try to improve it by eating low-fat food, taking vitamins and mineral supplements, going to the gym or jogging. But the same people, so caring about their health, damage it by smoking or excessive drinking. Although medical science has proved beyond any doubt, that smoking is extremely harmful, this fact does not put many people off smoking, resulting in serious illness and early death. This kind of behaviour looks very irrational and it is difficult to reconcile with our attitude to our health. However it could be explained by the functioning of our buffers. Our "I" responsible for our smoking does not communicate with the "I" taking care of our health. It

is the buffer that prevents the emergence in us of any worries by blocking transmission of information about the dangers of smoking to the "I" responsible for our health.

The blocking function of our buffers can be illustrated by analysing our attitude to the Darwin theory of evolution^a. This widely accepted theory states that human kind appeared on Earth as a result of random genetic mutation and the natural selection process - therefore as a result of chance. This theory does not have any need for the existence of a higher being, therefore it is not possible to reconcile the Darwin theory with any existing religion^b. However this fact does not prevent many religious people from the belief and even from the propagation of the Darwin theory. Again this is possible due to the functioning of our buffers, which prevent communication between the "I" responsible for our religious beliefs and the "I" responsible for our intellectual convictions. Without these buffers we could become aware of these contradictions and this could cause substantial stress or even psychological disorders.

The buffers also exert a great influence on the shaping of man's morality. Morality directs the behaviour of men and consists of different taboos, rules and restrictions, sometimes rationally incomprehensible. But morality is relative. What is moral in one country or social group is immoral in another. This is caused by the fact that morality consists of many buffers that depend on different living conditions and the history of the social life of communal groups and therefore it was formed independently. As a result of this process people do not share many moral values. We say that Christian morality exists in the West, but as a result of the functioning of buffers it has nothing in common with the teachings of Christ. Although Christian commandments forbid the killing of people, as a result of the functioning of buffers the combative soldiers and their army commanders did not suffer any remorse after killing millions of people during the two World Wars because it is moral to kill an enemy for the common good, even women and children. It is worth noting that in some countries a large part of the population does not consider corruption as immoral. Although in these countries the law forbids corruption and the justice system is fighting against it, its existence is accepted by the population and therefore it is impossible to eradicate it and it is again the buffers that prevent people from realising the damaging effects of corruption for the whole society.

Buffers are not created by Nature, but are made by men themselves. Buffers arise in men without them being aware of this process. They gradually and slowly develop from early childhood. They are formed by the family, schools and other types of education. Children surrounded by adults with buffers learn very quickly how to produce their own buffers. As a result of the mechanism of the arising of buffers, whole communal groups, or even nations, may have many common identical buffers. The buffers help to develop cohesion of the groups of people generating a common morality, culture, way of behaviour, but at the same time they prevent progress and block changes in society.

^a Discussed in Chapter 4.

^b J.F.Haught (in his book "God After Darwin", Westview Press, 2000) maintains that it is possible to reconcile the existence of God with the Darwin theory.

Centres of man

Gurdjieff explains that the existence of many "I's" in a man is a result of the work of special centres responsible for his functioning. In man there exist several independent centres and each of them is responsible for a specific activity and has a unique way of working. They can work completely independently of each other, or can communicate with each other. The centres could be compared to independent computers that are fully responsible for man's psychological states and the control of all his functions. These centres are located on three levels, similar to stories in a building. On the upper story there is the intellectual centre, on the middle story there is the emotional centre and on the lower story there are the moving, instinctive and sexual centres. These centres are performing the following functions:

Intellectual centre is responsible for creative, analytical and logical thinking, scientific discovery and inventions.

Emotional centre is responsible for feelings, for artistic reception and creation, aesthetics, moral and religious emotions.

Moving centre is responsible for the control of body movements, e.g. sporting activities, dance and physical work.

Instinctive centre controls the functioning of man's internal organs, is a source of intuition and drives instinctual behaviour.

Sexual centre is responsible for sexual behaviour, attraction, desires and gratification.

Each centre has its own mind, memory, associations and way of thinking. For example the mind of the instinctive centre is completely different from the mind of the intellectual centre. It is very complex and manages the work of the whole body, of thousands of its parts, all their biochemical processes, making sure that they operate in perfect harmony. For example during an illness the instinctive centre co-ordinates the fight of the body with the disease by directing a sufficient amount of energy to this purpose. To achieve this the instinctive centre can take away energy from the moving centre and then the person feels tired. It can take energy from the emotional centre making the man calmer and stop worrying about his usual everyday problems. Biological controls of the human body are beyond the capacity of the intellectual centre, because it is not capable of thinking about thousands of different processes at the same time. The intellectual centre can normally think only about one, or maximum two problems at the same time.

The mind of the emotional centre is very different from the mind of the intellectual centre. For example the intellectual centre is not capable of distinguishing many "shades" of feelings normally felt by man. A man, who does not feel anything himself, will not be able to understand the feelings of other men, even if he tries very hard to analyse them. Only the emotional centre is able to sense very quickly the internal states and emotions of other people, while the intellectual centre even after a long observation and analysis of the

behaviour of another person would not be able to identify it correctly, as confirmed by a folk traditional proverb "a full man does not understand a hungry one".

The mind of the moving centre is very different from the other centres. For example it is able to control the action of several muscles of a man, enabling him to walk or to throw a stone. This centre does many calculations, but they are very different from the analysis of the intellectual centre. The moving centre does not use words or numbers; however it can calculate with high precision the position of a tennis racket or the movement of a ballet dancer much faster than the speed of calculations of the intellectual centre. The memory of the moving centre has an extraordinary capacity. For example it enables a professional pianist during a concert to play from memory many thousands of musical notes co-ordinating movements of his fingers and feet.

The sexual centre plays a very important role in our life and it is frequently the main force behind our actions. Unfortunately we are often not aware of its influences on our behaviour, because the functions of the sexual centre are instinctive and hidden in our subconscious. It is the only centre that does not work on its own, but depends on the work of the other centres¹⁴. Lack of understanding of the work of the sexual centre, its influences and its control of our drives is a frequent cause of man's severe psychological problems.

Besides the discussed five basic centres there are two additional centres: the higher intellectual centre and the higher emotional centre. These centres are fully developed in every man, but we are not aware of their existence, because they are not connected to the other centres. The higher intellectual centre uses a symbolic language, and the higher emotional centre uses a mythical language, therefore man needs special training to utilise these centres. In practice, only people with a higher level of consciousness can use these centres and therefore their functioning is not applicable to the average person.

Each of the five centres is divided into three parts: higher - intellectual, middle - emotional and lower-mechanical. The emotional part of the intellectual centre is responsible for the search for knowledge, while the mechanical part of this centre is concerned with routine conversations, memorising of information, borrowing of other people's ideas, cunning behaviour and seeing everything in black and white. The mechanical part is quite crude and is characterised by the lack of depth, differentiation, tact, refinement and subtlety¹⁵. The mechanical part of the emotional centre is responsible for the automatic feelings of liking, disliking and desires. The emotional part of the emotional centre encompasses religious, aesthetic and moral emotions, and the intellectual part of the emotional centre covers artistic creation and is responsible for the desire to understand,. A summary of the functioning of the five basic centres is provided in Table 1.

Gurdjieff introduced further divisions of the centres. Each part of a centre is subdivided into three parts: mechanical, emotional and intellectual, but the application of further divisions requires a very good understanding of the centre's functions and therefore, for an average person, is of limited use.

Gurdjieff maintained that during even a very short period of time the behaviour of man could be under the influence of different parts of the same centre. The parts of a centre work independently and can change very rapidly. So, for example, during a conversation the controlling function can change continuously, switching from the mechanical to emotional and then to the intellectual part of our intellectual centre without our control and being aware of it. Such a conversation could start with formal greetings and small talk, move on to the description and analysis of a problem, the search for an understanding and end with reaching an agreement.

Table 1¹⁶

Functioning of man's centres

Centre	Functions of the centres		
	Mechanical Part	Emotional Part	Intellectual Part
Moving	Automatic reflexes, Movements, sport Imitation on lower levels	Pleasure in movements, playing games and sports, Imitation on higher levels - acting	Learning new movement - e.g. ballet Physical creative work e.g. building
Instinctive	Sensing taste, smell Reception from senses Unpleasant sensations - pain, tiredness	Instinctive love of mother, Jealousy, battle rage, fear Desire to kill	Many so-called intuitions, premonitions
Sexual	Sexual sensations	Sexual attraction and gratification Sexual frustration	Imagination of sex Perception of sex
Emotional	Emotion of one's liking and disliking, desiring Small desires: little "wills" Mechanical expression of emotions - gesticulation	Religious emotion Aesthetic emotions Moral emotions	Artistic creation Source of charisma Desire to understand
Intellectual	Learning by heart Repetition of words and phrases -mechanical talk Formatory apparatus	Search for knowledge Higher kind of imagination	Intellectual and scientific constructions Creative thoughts Discoveries, new ideas

Gurdjieff's description of the centres of man is mainly concerned with the principle of the functioning of the human mind and he has not attempted to locate the position of these centres¹⁷. However recent

neuropsychological investigation has shown that it is possible to identify the position of the main centres in the human brain. According to MacLean¹⁸, an American neurologist, the human brain consists of three independent brains, each with its specific intelligence and memory. He has identified some emotional functions in the primitive, early mammals' second brain, known as the limbic cortex located in the middle part of the brain, while intellectual functions of man are located in the outer layers of the human cortex. His results demonstrate that several functions belonging, according to Gurdjieff, to the instinctive centre such as fear, aggression, hunger, sex, sense of smell and taste are located in the second brain.

Negative parts of centres

Each centre, with the exception of the sexual centre, consists of a negative part and a positive part. In the intellectual centre the positive part is responsible for confirmation, that is for saying YES. The negative part is responsible for criticism and saying NO. Without the negative part the intellectual centre would not be able to work properly, because its thinking is based on a comparison between two sets of information or values. During the process of thinking we are choosing between YES and NO, we have to make a decision between accepting and rejecting. These two parts of the intellectual centre should work like a pair of scissors' blades¹⁹. However in some people these two parts do not function correctly and the negative thinking is not connected with the positive thinking resulting in a deformed picture of reality. As a result of this faulty process uncontrolled negative thinking could occur, manifesting itself in different forms. People can have negative thoughts about themselves, about others, about life, practically about everything. A negative person always finds a fault, always splits hairs, always picks holes. The situation of such people is quite hopeless and they cannot do anything about it because the malfunctioning of the intellectual centre is completely beyond their control. The other extreme, functioning only of the positive part, is very exceptional and manifests itself as a "holy" person, who never notices negative aspects of life and is unable to recognise potential dangers. Such people are very often victims of their naivety and are unable to protect themselves and their family against crooks and tricksters.

In the instinctive centre we can also distinguish positive and negative parts. The positive part is responsible for our pleasant sensations and other pleasures; the negative parts are responsible for pain and unpleasant feelings like tiredness. The negative part has the role of a guardian, warning us against potential dangers such as burning our fingers by a flame.

The negative part of the emotional centre is the main source of our negative emotion. Unlike the negative part of the intellectual centre, it is not inborn and it has no allocated specific functions to perform. This part is normally acquired during childhood by contact with adults. It develops gradually when a child is observing and imitating the behaviour of adults such as the tone of their voice, expressions on their faces, verbal and bodily reactions that reflect their negative emotions. These negative emotions are passed to a child, who absorbs them and starts producing his own negative emotions, at first as tantrums, sulking, bad

behaviour, complaining etc. Because people are not aware that negative emotions are harmful, they are not able to break this cycle of passing them from generation to generation. It would not be an exaggeration to conclude that the emotional centre hardly ever works properly and its negative part is mainly responsible for our miserable lives and for embittering the lives of other people who are close to us.

Malfunctioning of centres

Efficient functioning of man depends on the use of a centre appropriate for a specific activity. If we want to achieve a certain target and that task requires analysis and understanding of the situation and selection of the correct method of working, we should use the intellectual centre. If the work is not progressing well and we are experiencing some difficulties, very often we begin to get nervous and this is a sign that control is being taken by the emotional centre. In this condition we do not have any chance of achieving our target and first we have to cool down and compose ourselves before we continue with the work. However if the negative part of our emotional centre takes control, we might even give up our task

A man performing simple, repetitive work in a factory such as regular hammering could concentrate so much on his task that he could use his intellectual centre. In this case it would be an unnecessary application of this centre because this work could be done by his moving centre. Application of the intellectual centre would result in much slower operation and unnecessary spending of energy resulting in rapid exhaustion.

To perform certain complicated activities such as driving a car efficiently we should use the moving centre. However, at the beginning of learning, when we are using our intellectual centre, our performance is very poor. Sometimes our emotional centre takes control and in such a case we could panic and cause an accident. During the learning process we quickly get tired because we use a lot of energy. What is worse, we are unable to drive with the required speed and to concentrate on the road at the same time. After completing the training we can drive the car much faster, without much stress using only the moving centre. To improve our performance we must determine which is the best centre for this task.

It often happens that when we are making a decision affecting our personal life such as "should I marry this person?", we base it on the decision of our emotional centre that says YES, while we ignore our intellectual centre that says NO, or vice versa. The decision to marry someone based on the opposing opinions of our centres will result sooner or later in serious marital problems. Before making up our mind we should make sure that decisions important to us will not be made exclusively by one centre or even by the wrong centre, for example, when a decision to marry is based on the opinion of the sexual centre. Making a decision is a very complex process and requires understanding of the functioning of all our centres and only then we will be able to see the problem from the point of view of each centre.

The sexual centre is very important for the well being and proper development of man. This centre does not have a negative part and therefore normal sexual sensations are pleasant or neutral. However, as a result of malfunctioning of other centres, the sexual centre can fall under the influence of the negative part of the

emotional or instinctive centres. In such a situation people might experience unpleasant feelings connected with sex and as a result of it they might avoid it altogether. In the past these types of feelings were mistakenly considered to be a virtue and merit, while in reality they are the symptoms of an illness. In the case of such symptoms it is more common at the present time to seek professional help, but this was not the case in Gurdjieff's time.

Linking of the sexual centre to the intellectual centre might over-stimulate our sexual imagination and could in extreme cases have the result that our sexual needs are fulfilled exclusively by our imagination. Connecting the sexual centre with the emotional centre might lead to sentimentality and jealousy, and connecting with the instinctive centre could result in sexual cruelty and masochism.

Each centre has been allocated a certain amount of energy needed for its functioning. However it may happen that the dominant intellectual, moving or emotional centre is robbing energy from the sexual centre hindering man's normal sexual life^a. The sexual energy that is utilised by other centres can be identified by a specific, intense and vehement action of these centres. Thus, the intellectual centre is not merely creating or discovering something but is fighting for the acceptance of new ideas, criticising or proposing new controversial theories. The emotional centre converts people to the "true" religion, spreads asceticism, preaches against sins and frightens people with hell and damnation. At the opposite end of the scale it causes revolution, propagates terror, and supports violence and racism. The moving centre, when involved with sports, breaks records, wins contests, or climbs unconquered mountains and wins races. Therefore people who obsessively want to reach the peaks of success in order to fulfil their excessive ambitions have to use their sexual energy.

Improper usage of parts of the centres

Depending on the situation and circumstances each part of the centre has a specific function to perform. The improper selection of a part of the centre to perform a required task is often the source of many problems. Selection of a part of the centre can be controlled by us, but it is linked to a level of our attention. In normal man we can distinguish three levels of attention²⁰:

- no attention,
- attention with minimum effort,
- attention requiring a lot of effort and depending on man's will.

Man on the first level of attention is normally working in the mechanical parts of his centres. The second level of attention is connected with the work of the emotional centre, and the third level is connected with

^a Freud maintained that man does not possess unlimited source of psychic energy, and therefore he can only fulfil his social duties by taking energy from his libido - sexual energy.

the work of the intellectual centre. The higher level of attention corresponds to working in more conscious parts of our centres.

As has been mentioned, the emotional part of the intellectual centre is connected with the desire of knowledge, searching for discoveries and finding the "truth". In this part concentration does not require much effort because it is sustained by the interest in a subject. The same applies to other centres where the emotional parts provide pleasant impressions, emotions and experience.

On the other hand, working in the intellectual parts of centres always requires a high level of attention. When we are creating, searching, explaining or proving, we are using the intellectual part of our intellectual centre. Working in this part does not provide instant results and visible benefits, and we do not feel any pleasure, satisfaction or gratification and therefore we have to use our will to keep our concentration on the task.

Mechanical parts are the most automatic and most frequently used parts of our centres. Working in the mechanical part does not require any concentration and effort on our side, therefore it starts functioning almost automatically. Because this part is switched on even without our awareness it is mainly responsible for our functioning. For example, during conversation, when the mechanical part of the intellectual centre is taking control our talking is "thoughtless", done without any intellectual effort, using - one could say - almost unconsciously, commonplace phrases and platitudes, and repeating other peoples opinions and commonly known information. The mechanical part should never answer specific questions addressed to an individual i.e. to the intellectual part of his intellectual centre. In case of malfunctioning his mechanical part would use, in answering the question, routine statements and stereotypical opinions. It would be answering like an information officer, replying to the same questions dozens of times, or like a politician during his election campaign. Very often people do not realise that they respond in such non-original a way because they do not pay attention, do not want to involve themselves or are unable to think. Often they are too lazy to formulate an independent and committed opinion.

Correctly working mechanical parts of our centres should be responsible for controlling our daily life and dealing with routine events. Mechanical parts have a very important role to perform, because working at zero concentration does not burden our brain with unnecessary effort. Using only mechanical parts of the centres man can function relatively well under familiar and stable conditions in a well known environment. However he will not be able to adjust himself to any changes and new situations in his life, for example a new job, divorce or death in the family. He is not applying his knowledge and is not using his intellect; in fact, he is behaving like a robot. This type of person is unable to understand situations and problems outside his own "small world", unable to understand their own problems, they are unable to understand other people's problems, not to mention general human life and world problems.

Three types of man

Depending on the relative importance and dominance of each centre as regards the behaviour of man, Gurdjieff distinguishes three types of man²¹:

Type one man has his centre of gravity in the moving and instinctive centres, which determine his behaviour and conduct. On the intellectual level he will memorise information and use other people's opinions and judgements. His outlook on life is determined by the prevailing authorities. Having a good memory can help him achieve very good academic results and acquire the reputation of a well educated and intelligent person. In the arts he will be interested in sensual and realistic forms of expressions. In religion he will prefer rites and ceremonies. In daily life he will quickly make up his mind using his intuition rather than intellect. His behaviour might be pompous and he might lack a sense of humour. Professionally he could be successful in sports, business or the army.

Type two man is directed by his emotional centre. On the intellectual level he tends to separate knowledge and information he comes in contact with into two groups: what he believes in and what he does not believe in, without analysing the facts. He has very strong religious, political and racial convictions that might lead to intolerance. He prefers sentimental art, in religion he strives for love and faith. He tends, in his everyday life, to make decisions based on feelings and emotions. Professionally he could achieve success in arts, politics or the church.

Type three man is mainly under the influence of his intellectual centre. He has the ability to think logically and analytically, and prefers literal interpretation of facts. He excels in abstract and theoretical work. In the arts he is looking for discovery, novelty and intellectual interpretation. In religion he will focus on theological proofs and arguments. He will make decisions after a long analysis of complete sets of information. Professionally he could succeed in the sciences, engineering, medicine and law.

These three types present a very simplistic picture of man. In real life man uses all three centres to different degrees. Moreover the level of activity of each part of a centre is changeable. The true model of the functioning of man is much more complex than presented in the above typology. Therefore classification of man into 3 categories is not a simple task and requires careful observation and deep analysis of his behaviour. It is safer to say that the "pure" type one, two or three man does not exist, and that every person is a mixture of these three types in different proportions.

It is worth mentioning that Jung's typology²² is similar to Gurdjieff's classification. Jung divides the conscious function of man into four groups linked in pairs: thinking and feeling, intuition and senses. According to Jung man belonging to one group has predominantly developed one function, and the second function from the same pair is underdeveloped and inferior. Two functions from the other pair play an auxiliary role. Jung does not distinguish separate moving and sexual functions that exist in every man. His intuitive and sensing functions correspond to different parts of the moving and instinctive centres in the

Gurdjieff typology. The Gurdjieff system includes physical and psychological functions of man, while Jung concentrates mainly on the psychological aspects.

States of man's consciousness

It is generally believed that, with the exception of conditions such as addiction and mental illnesses, man functions in two states of consciousness: sleep and awakening. We are convinced that when we wake up we attain the state of full consciousness and we stay conscious all the time. Western psychology, contrary to Eastern psychology, states that man in the awakening state is fully conscious and that there are no other states of consciousness.

Gurdjieff maintains that there are more states of consciousness than is widely recognised, and distinguishes four states of man's consciousness:

sleep

awakening

self consciousness

objective consciousness

Sleep

In sleep we spend one third, or sometimes more, of our life. Gurdjieff claimed that to generate "special needed substances" for our body we do not need long sleep. We need much more time to rest because our sleep is very inefficient and people tend to spend most of their time in the intermediate state between sleep and awakening, i.e. dreaming. Our centres of functioning do not sleep and are active all the time. During dreaming our sensations, feelings and perception of images result from the interaction between the centres and therefore communication connections between the centres are not broken. There are people whose capacity to move, to walk, to live, stops only when all the connections are broken, and there are other people in whom it is enough to break two connections for them to fall asleep.²³ In a state of deep sleep communication between the centres is interrupted and then we do not dream or have other sensations. Gurdjieff maintained that mainly during deep sleep our centres are going through the process of rest and recovery and generating 'special substances'..

Awakening state

The awakening state is recognised by Western psychology as the one and only complete state of man's consciousness. Psychologists reckon that in this state we can control our attention and direct it where we want - outside or inside. In this state we have free will and do what we wish. However Gurdjieff claimed that this, what we call consciousness, was not the true and only consciousness man could attain. In the awakening state man can be aware of his emotions, thoughts or physical movements, but the consciousness

of these functions is very faint and changeable. Most of these functions are carried out automatically and man is often not aware and does not understand why he is saying or acting in a particular manner.

People are convinced that they are conscious all the time, because when we ask ourselves if we are conscious it is self-evident that we are. More than a hundred years ago William James, a famous psychologist and the greatest American philosopher, compared an attempt to observe an unconscious state to trying to observe darkness by switching on a gas lamp. Using a more modern example - observing an unconscious state is like observing darkness inside a fridge when we open the door. Notwithstanding how quickly we open it we always see the light.

For a perceptive observer it is very obvious that people can think, feel and act without being fully conscious of what they are doing. We know that in our daily life we can do many simple tasks or even drive a car without being fully aware of our actions. We simply observe and register events, analyse dangerous situations and respond to them automatically. Sometimes we catch ourselves saying or doing something unwittingly. We blame this on our forgetfulness, absent-mindedness, distractions, absorption in thoughts, or simply tiredness, but it never crosses our mind that for a certain period of time we were unconscious because, in general, we can recollect events from this "unconscious" period.

Koestler said that the level of man's consciousness decreases in proportion to the degree of his habitual behaviour. When we are learning to do something new it requires our increased awareness. When we are well trained we can do the task automatically. Such a difficult task like landing an aircraft requires a very high level of concentration from the pilot, but not a high level of consciousness, because his skills are so high, that he can use them automatically, like an auto-pilot.

In most situations, absence of consciousness is not noticed because it is not causing any harm and sometimes quite the opposite is true. In many familiar situations we function much better using only the mechanical parts of our centres without any stress and a need for concentration.

The most important characteristic of the awakening state is that in this state people are unable to "remember themselves", it means that they are unable to understand why they acted in this but not another way, and what the state and origin of their awareness in a specific moment of time was. In this state most people are unable to analyse themselves and their life passes automatically, without a moment of self-reflection and self-analysis. Even their religious life consists, more or less, of habitual rituals and ceremonies. People in this state do not try to truly understand other people and their involvement with them is perfunctory. They do not ponder on man's life problems and they do not ask themselves difficult questions. They are not troubled by any doubts and they have ready-made stereotype solutions for every problem. They are not interested in learning more about themselves because they are convinced that they already know enough. Even if they notice in themselves something strange or unusual, they will not allow this to absorb their mind. They do not control their mental processes and therefore they are susceptible to suggestions and

external influences. When they have a psychological problem such as depression, they will not try to understand its origins, but will get relief from antidepressants, drugs or alcohol.

Gurdjieff maintained that most people are living as if suspended in a light hypnotic "sleep" and spend their life in the state of minimum attention. If a man's consciousness is not awakened, Gurdjieff describes this man as being asleep. To prove this statement he uses a very convincing argument: how could it be possible for fully conscious people to kill each other during the last World War to achieve some trivial and illusive aims. Only asleep people would be able to do it.

The process of falling asleep starts during childhood as a result of education, upbringing and the examples of behaviour given by adults. Very often children show manifestations of "awakening" and see the world in a different way to adults. Children in this condition often ask "childish" questions, which are very difficult to answer. Normally adults are unable to answer these types of questions because they never ponder on these types of problems, and usually dismiss the child's query by saying "do not ask stupid questions". After several such attempts children themselves start treating these questions as stupid and stop thinking about these issues. As a result of this experience they fall in to a permanent state of "being asleep".

State of self-consciousness

The concept of the state of self-consciousness was introduced in the West by Gurdjieff. Ouspensky wrote: "But man does not know of the third state of consciousness or even suspect it. Nor can he suspect it because if you were to explain to him what the third state of consciousness is, that is to say, in what it consists, he would say that it was his usual state. He considers himself to be a conscious being governing his own life"²⁴. This state has not been studied by academic psychology yet because it manifests itself in man very rarely and only in exceptional situations. It might appear when we are in great danger, in completely new and difficult circumstances, during distressing experiences and in a state of great stress. During such moments we start to realise that we truly exist, that life is precious, that material things do not matter. These flashes last only a very short time, but they put us in a state of euphoria and deep satisfaction. For example, men who fought during a war and were exposed to great danger, tend to constantly return to these traumatic events because, surprisingly, it was exactly these terrible events that gave meaning to their lives, and brought fulfilment, simply because for the first time they felt like real men.

Jung in his analysis of the human psyche identifies a psychic centre that can be linked to the state of self-consciousness and he calls it Self²⁵. Self represents psychological wholeness because it encompasses all components of the human psyche - conscious and unconscious. Self directs our psyche, but normally we are not conscious of its activity and therefore we are unable to control it. Learning about Self gives man the cognisance of the contents of his own and collective unconsciousness. As a result of this process his behaviour and his relations with other people undergo dramatic changes. When Self is fully discovered and assimilated by our conscious Ego, then it starts playing a dominant role, while Ego remains the centre of our

consciousness in our awakening state. Using Jung's terminology we could say that the state of self-consciousness is reached when man is able to cognise his Self and to assimilate a part of its unconscious contents into his conscious sphere.

Transpersonal psychology has been concerned, over the last twenty years, with the study of higher states of consciousness. Christina and Stanislav Grof wrote that in some people - as a result of psychological shock, stress, serious illness and in women sometimes as a result of emotional stress during childbirth - the contents of their unconsciousness starts to penetrate to their consciousness, helping to stabilise their psyche, but completely changing their personality. The Grofs called this state a spiritual emergency. People in this state experience very unusual and strong psychological sensations that in many cases could be seen as symptoms of a psychological illness. Modern Western medicine has not identified the sources of these processes and treats these states as psychoses originating from unknown causes, and tries to suppress them by using strong tranquillisers. However people who pass through the spiritual emergency process without pharmacological intervention, attain deep understanding of themselves and the surrounding world, and change their attitude to life. They describe experiences that could be classified as mystic or divine. Examples of such states can be found in the Bible in the description of the conversion of Saint Paul²⁶, in writings of Saint Theresa of Avila, in the works of such poets as William Blake, Walt Whitman, or the philosopher Lao Tzu. The mission of Joan d'Arc may have resulted from her reaching a similar state of consciousness²⁷.

In practice only a few, especially predisposed individuals can spontaneously gain access to their unconscious. To this type of people might belong outstanding poets, painters and composers, who present in their works of art the contents of their unconscious. However, for most people this access is not completely closed. Gurdjieff maintained that through continuous self-development we could attain moments of self-consciousness, but this would require a great level of concentration and a great deal of effort. Achieving this state should be the first and most important step in man's development.

Objective consciousness

The fourth level of consciousness is the highest level man could ever reach. This level is comparable to divine consciousness. Man who attains it has one undividing and unchanging "I" that governs his life. He possesses free will and knows what to do. In this state he is able to see reality as it truly is, he can cognise the objective truth about everything, and his perception of the world around him is not influenced by any subjective elements.

Many religions maintain that it is possible to attain objective consciousness and they call this state Enlightenment. There might be a few individuals who have been able to gain Enlightenment, but for an average person this is impossible to achieve. The way to achieve objective consciousness is through the further development of self-consciousness, but Gurdjieff does not provide directions on how it can be done.

Systems of consciousness in Eastern philosophy

Higher levels of consciousness, introduced by Gurdjieff, can also be found in the rich tradition of Eastern philosophical systems. Belief in the existence of several levels of consciousness is an essential ingredient of Eastern religions and metaphysical systems such as Vedanta Hinduism, Tibetan Vajrayana, Zen and Yogacara Buddhism. These systems usually distinguish five or more levels of consciousness. In all these systems there exists, at the highest level, a state of absolute consciousness. There are states corresponding to the state of self-consciousness, meditation, collective unconscious, intellectual reflections, the will of life and others. These systems explain the complex structure of man's psychological life and his higher psychological experiences much better than Western systems. The main weakness of Eastern psychology is a lack of good understanding of man's behaviour in the state of awakening consciousness and a lack of understanding of the role of unconscious.

Systems of consciousness in Western tradition

Development of Western psychology started less than two centuries ago. One of the first advocates of the multilevel system of consciousness was William James who said "Our normal waking consciousness is but one special type of consciousness, while all about it parted from it by the filmiest of screens there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence, but apply the requisite stimulus and at a touch they are there in all their completeness.... No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded."²⁸ The official (Institutional) outlook on man in the 20th century was dominated by behaviourist psychology and clinical psychiatry. These approaches completely ignored the higher levels of consciousness and treated other states of consciousness outside the awakening state as pathological states needing intervention. In the 1960s there appeared a new approach to man's states of consciousness called transpersonal psychology²⁹. The pioneers of this movement were Abraham Maslow, Ken Wilber and Stanislav Grof. Maslow summarised the existing state of knowledge in this way: "What we call normality in psychology is really a psychopathology of the average, so undramatic and so widely spread that we do not even notice it"³⁰.

Transpersonal psychology identified and concentrated on other states of consciousness, especially consciousness connected with special states and spiritual and religious experiences. Transpersonal psychology relates to Jung's psychology, especially to the collective unconscious, to Rank's concept of the trauma of birth³¹ and to Eastern psychology. Ken Wilber proposed that man's levels of consciousness is in the form of a continuous spectrum - a multilevel structure with many intermediate bands³². He based his system on Eastern teachings, but was also influenced by Gurdjieff's model of consciousness.

It is noticeable that Western psychology is becoming increasingly interested in higher levels of consciousness beyond the level of consciousness in the awakening state. This is needed in order to explain many observed psychological phenomena and states that cannot be explained using the traditional model.

Main characteristics of man in the awakening state

Let us consider some psychological characteristics of man affecting his behaviour in the awakening state. Many of his traits cause him severe psychological anxiety and do not allow him to realise his true situation. What is worse, they block his chances of removing the causes of his suffering. These traits are responsible for creating in man illusions regarding his possibilities and as a result of their influence he does not see any need to attain a higher level of consciousness. The main features responsible for making our life unpleasant include man's predisposition to the identification and formation of uncontrolled negative emotions. The main characteristics that obstruct man's development include the illusion of being conscious and of having a free will.

Identification

Identification is the most common man's psychological feature, but it is the most difficult to define. Identification is everywhere, in every moment of our lives, and can almost be considered one of our permanent states³³. It is virtually impossible to have any feelings without identification.

Let us try to elucidate how identification manifests itself. A man could be in a state of depression, afraid of something, feeling angry or resentful i.e. experiencing very unpleasant feelings. When the feeling of his "I" and the perception of his psychological state are the same feelings, in other words, his "I" directly experiences these feelings without a man being aware of it - then he is in a state of identification. In such a state a man is engrossed in himself and his "I", and is deeply embedded in his feelings. He is not aware that he is fully immersed in his thoughts, desires, problems or predicaments. When we identify ourselves with one idea or emotion, other thoughts or feelings do not exist for us. Identification has a strong hold over us and controls our lives, therefore one could say that it replaces, in effect, our consciousness.

In the state of identification we are unable to critically look at a given situation, analyse it and see "the other side of the coin". It is a form of obsession practically impossible to get rid of. Moreover, identification leads to the rational explanation of our behaviour and therefore we are convinced that we are right. Identification is an extremely strong state and has an iron-like grip on us. In this state man's attention is directed outside, focussed on what caused this identification and therefore he is unable to look inside himself - which means that he is unable to see his true behaviour and analyse his thoughts. Identification with a problem has the result that we are unable to realise how our behaviour affects other people, especially our friends and family.

For a better comprehension of identification it might be easier to understand non-identification. In this state we act as an impartial witness who is observing, for example, a scene that our spouse is making, but we are

not emotionally blinded, we listen and calmly respond to the accusations and reproaches. If we imagine this type of behaviour we can realise how difficult it is not to identify ourselves with some emotional situations in our daily lives.

To illustrate the extent and depth of the identification process, let us consider some examples. One of the most common predicaments is identification of a mother with the conviction that her child's prospective or present spouse is not good enough and unsuitable for her child. This situation is very common in almost every culture and is known as "the mother-in-law problem", which is the subject of many jokes. This is, however a very serious problem, because the mother's identification can prevent or destroy her children's marriage or, at best, cause unhappiness and complicate their lives. At the same time the mother is convinced that she loves her children and that she interferes in their life for their own good.

Identification, by a man, with lack of money could result in him taking an additional job and working excessive hours, missing holidays and losing contact with his wife and children. A very frequent "rational" explanation for such behaviour is "I am doing this for my family", but he is completely unaware that it is his family who is suffering because of his absence. A non-identified man in a similar financial situation would look for different solutions: how to reduce expenditure, give up certain luxuries, and would control his working hours to have time for his friends, family and his hobbies.

Man can also identify with himself. In this state he believes in his own importance, cleverness, abilities, achievements or popularity. He is strongly convinced of his own values and is full of self-confidence. He is sure that he is always right and that others should comply with his wishes. He is sensitive to any criticism and needs constant adoration. Such identification could be seen as the "professional disorder" of film and television stars.

People who have invested a lot of time and effort in achieving a certain goal and in the end failed, identify with their failure in a peculiar way. They are frustrated, sad and feel that they live a monotonous life. They believe that life is unfair, that they should have fared better and that others are more lucky.

We have to understand that every identification is harmful, even if this is identification with work, interests or hobbies. These types of identifications are considered positive and are called enthusiasm, passion, eagerness etc., but in reality these passions can enslave man and affect his spouse and children who are neglected or ignored. A man identified with himself will not be interested in other people's problems and in any issues that are not affecting him personally. Moreover, he is unable to relax and stop being self-centred, and cannot forget about himself even for a short period of time. He is that rich man from the New Testament about whom Christ said "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God"³⁴. This is a very frequently quoted, but least understood parable from the Bible. Even the Apostles did not understand its full meaning. Man identifying with himself is like a blind person, he does not see other human beings, therefore he cannot be a true Christian.

It is very difficult to grasp, by many people, that a man who is behaving well, fulfilling his duty, helping others or even sacrificing his life for others could be this rich man from the parable, because he is identified with himself and acts accordingly with his image of himself, not because he "loves thy neighbour".

Considering

Identification with our thoughts about other people and other people's thoughts about us - what they expect from us, their opinion of us - is called considering. Gurdjieff distinguishes two types of considering: internal and external. Internal considering includes focussing on what other people think about us, how they treat us, their attitude towards us. Internal considering is based on our conviction that we are right and other people are wrong, that other people should treat us better and should have a better attitude towards us. When, for example a waiter fails to serve us immediately, or we do not get a promotion at work, then we tend to brood about it, imagining that we are not respected or appreciated, and such thoughts could rankle in our minds long afterwards. As a result of this attitude we could become suspicious and hostile towards other people.

In this state we might be seized by a feeling of injustice and indignation with a guilty party. People sometimes say, when resentful, "Do you know who I am", which indicates that they think the other person does not realise how important and worthy they are.

In some cases individuals are so concerned about other people's opinion about themselves, that they might be being made fun of, that it becomes a worry to them throughout their lives. When we are in the state of internal considering we are mentally settling accounts with others, we feel that other people owe us something, that we deserve better treatment, prizes, appreciation. We remember everything we have given others, what we have received, what losses we've suffered. All these shortcomings are recorded in our mental "accounting" book. Such people tend to feel sorry for themselves and start telling everybody, sometimes after a few drinks, how badly life is treating them, how they have not been given a fair chance, how nobody understands them, what a difficult childhood they had, and in effect blame others for their failures. Such negative feelings, especially when lasting for a long time, could drain a person's life energy, kill his happiness and make him an emotional cripple.

Some people, who have identified with their own suffering, feel superior to others because they have experienced serious illness or other personal problems. They think that the mere fact of suffering gives them a special quality and puts them above others. They feel indignant when other people start talking about their own suffering instead of admiring their life courage.

External considering is the antipode of internal considering. External considering is based on adjustment to other people, to their ways of thinking and understanding their true needs. It consists of helping and supporting others, showing compassion, kind-heartedness without expectation of gratitude or gain. Practising external considering is not an easy thing to do, because it requires possessing a certain knowledge of working of man's psyche, understanding their likes and dislikes, habits and prejudices. At the same time it

requires strong willpower and an ability of tactful behaviour, thus true insight and full consideration of other people is a prerequisite. It needs effort, responsibility and paying attention, but in return will lead to better relations between people. External considering reduces tension between people, and the persons practising it make life easier for themselves and others³⁵.

There is a danger that external considering could easily change into internal considering if we expect appreciation and gratitude for what we have done and do not receive it. For example, we take care of a sick person, but our sacrifice is not appreciated by that person after they recover from the illness. Therefore it is important to understand that the fact that we are capable of practising external considering should give us sufficient satisfaction, and we should not expect anything in return, we should feel like parents who are taking care of their children.

Negative emotions

Usually we are able to identify our strong negative emotions, but we are not necessarily always aware of them. When we hate somebody who has hurt us, or when we quarrel with someone, we do not have any doubts about our feelings. When these emotions are very strong it is difficult to get rid of them. They accompany us all day and on going to bed and waking up. A person whom we hate becomes like a spectre, haunting us. It means that we have lost our freedom and that we are in his power. Uncontrolled negative emotions become a force that destroys our life and very often causes much more harm than the original wrong done by the hated perpetrator.

However, we do not realise that our daily life is also crowded with many negative emotions. If we analysed very carefully our thoughts, comments, opinions, conversations with our friends and family we would always uncover negative elements deeply hidden under the guise of kindness, caring about someone, having a strong sense of justice etc. For example when we think automatically about our beloved husband we do not think "what a fantastic person he is", but very often we have negative thoughts like "he will be late again", "he will buy the wrong goods"; often we think about our best friend: "she's wearing an awful dress", or "he drinks too much". One could argue that these kinds of thoughts are insignificant, but because they are linked to our negative parts of the emotional centre, they are always the result of negative feelings that are harmful to us. Negative emotions become a part of our culture, our social life. How many times have we said "the government is inefficient", "the neighbours are noisy", "youngsters behave badly" and "garage mechanics are ripping us off"? These are only a few examples of our daily comments. It does not matter that some of these allegations could be true, what is important is that we have selected just these statements from a list of many, often positive facts. Many of our negative emotions result from trifling events. Somebody did not answer our question, forgot our birthday or did not acknowledge our greeting and we are fuming inside and become very stressed. Friendly talk could clarify and remove most causes of our negative feelings and

reduce our anger and stress, but we are unable to initiate it, because our negative emotions do not allow us to do this.

Every situation in our lives we are encountering has negative aspects, and every person whom we are dealing with has negative traits in his character, therefore we do not have to search very hard to find excuses for the emergence of our negative emotions. We are convinced that other people or unpropitious circumstances are responsible for our negative emotions. The truth is that such negative emotions cannot arise as a result of external factors. Negative emotions are embedded in us, other people or external conditions can only trigger their manifestation. Usually negative emotions result from the interaction of two components: identification and imagination. Identification plays a very important role in the generation of negative emotions because it prevents clear thinking and does not allow us to judge the situation correctly and to take other aspects and circumstances into account. Imagination is responsible for the generation of false pictures of other people, for a distorted perception of their behaviour and is instrumental in rationalising our negative attitudes.

Negative emotions manifest themselves in many different forms and have varied intensities. People have an immense repertoire of negative feelings. Strong negative emotions include anger, envy, hate, despair and fear. Less intense emotions include laziness, vanity, self pity, grudge, rancour, boredom, resentment, irritation and different kinds of sentimental feelings including what is commonly described as humanitarianism and charity. There are forms of negative intellectual attitudes such as cynicism, unnecessary argumentation, pessimism and suspicion. There is an important group of negative emotions that is commonly not regarded as negative at all. This group includes chauvinistic patriotism dividing people into opposing camps: "we good, they bad"; deep piousness dividing people into "we believers, they sinners". These feelings could lead to bloody and brutal conflicts. The above list gives only a few examples of negative emotions, in reality it is much longer. Even positive emotional states such as love or friendship are very unstable and as a result of negative factors, or our imagination, can easily change into negative feelings. Ouspensky said that the world is not ruled by power or sex, but by negative emotions. They are responsible for most of the Evil on Earth.

Many negative emotions are difficult to identify because, unconsciously they may give us satisfaction. For example when we scorn our child "don't touch it, it's dirty", "don't run or you'll fall " we consider ourselves very caring parents. When we correct our friends who have done something wrong, we regard ourselves as good friends and reckon that we are doing it for their own good. There exist even worse situations whereby some people enjoy their negative outlook, because hurting other people gives them satisfaction; thus they cling to their negative emotions more than to anything else. Some people are proud of their negative attitudes and see themselves as strong, tough, unyielding, conscientious, moral etc., although in reality they use their negative emotions to oppress and subordinate others.

Ouspensky observed that very often people lose their negative tendency when they are facing a real crisis or are in great danger³⁶. In this type of situation they try to help each other and find positive solutions to their problems. As a matter of fact, our negative state arises much more easily under routine, well known and secure conditions. The cause of these negative emotional states lies in our automatic functioning resulting from workings in the mechanical parts of our centres. In such conditions our negative emotions are generated without our awareness. If our negative emotions were inborn, we would never be able to get rid of them. Luckily, they are acquired later in life and are completely unnecessary to our functioning, therefore we have the chance to limit their influence on our life. According to Ouspensky people do not have genuine positive emotions because they can easily change into negative emotions³⁷.

A peculiar characteristic of negative emotions is that they remain with us for a long time after their original cause has disappeared, and that new negative emotions can be generated. This becomes most visible in cases of internal considering when people might be nursing their grievances and resentment against others for years.

"Lying"

Gurdjieff maintained that an inevitable feature of our behaviour in the awakening state is 'lying'. We are not talking here about deliberate social lying resulting from our laziness or convenience, to protect ourselves or not to harm others, to obtain some gain or glory. We are talking about lies about ourselves, our behaviour, qualities and beliefs; in general, lies about our psychological condition. Gurdjieff believed that people rarely lie on purpose when they talk about themselves, but very often when they lie they think that they are telling the truth. The most harmful of all lies is unconscious lying, especially when we are deluding ourselves. Gurdjieff said that people are lying when they are talking about things they do not understand and know nothing about.

Fromm, one of the outstanding thinkers of the 20th century, said this about lying when writing about Freud: "Freud showed that we all deceive ourselves to a larger or smaller degree about the truth. Even if we are sincere with regard to what we are aware of, we are probably still lying because our consciousness is 'false', it does not represent the underlying real experience within ourselves"³⁸. To illustrate this, Fromm describes a leader, whose political decisions could bring the country to war. The true motivation behind his bellicose behaviour is his lust for power and glory that could be gained by war, however sincerely he might believe that his action is driven by patriotism and the feeling of responsibility for his country.

Unconscious lying can result from different psychological processes. Many lies are created by the buffers that automatically control man's thinking and talking, and in this way protect him against exposing contradictions between the actions of his different "I's". Lying may also result from the wrong judgement of our abilities, our true situation or our feelings. For example during a marriage ceremony we promise to love our partner "till death do us part", but this promise cannot be fulfilled, because it would require one and

unchanging "I", which would be practically impossible. Another kind of lie results from attributing ourselves some kind of qualities that we do not possess. We think that we have power and free will to do what we want, that we have the power and abilities to change ourselves, that we truly know ourselves.

Lies also arise as a result of identification and considering. They are necessary, because they help to explain and justify our identified behaviour. When we identify ourselves with a certain state, for example with our work, then we keep persuading ourselves and others how important our work is for the company, sciences, humankind etc., that we are indispensable, without us the company would collapse. In our belief these statements are not lies but the self-evident truth. In such situations the lies are very convincing and the identified person is unable to recognise them.

The negative part of our emotional centre is also responsible for the creation of many lies. Very often our negative emotions result from the "wrong" perception of a person. For example there is a growing conviction in us that someone is unjust, malicious, evil-minded etc. and we develop very negative attitudes towards this person. All negative emotions cause some sort of lies and as a result they deform reality.

If a man has a negative attitude, he, as a rule, will always lie. According to Gurdjieff, in the life of an ordinary man the truth and the lie do not have any moral values, because man is unable to distinguish between them.

Talkativeness

Gurdjieff maintained that the most common characteristic of man in the awakened state of consciousness is a need for constant and excessive talking. We spend all our lives on internal or external talking³⁹. Our internal talking is manifested by constant verbal thinking about people, things, our problems, events without any purpose or benefits to us. We can easily observe our constant stream of thoughts when for example we try very hard to concentrate on and listen to classical music. We find that after a few minutes of concentration we start thinking about trivial problems without being aware of it.

When we observe other people we find that their external talking is also beyond their control and it is visible to us that people are under a compulsion to talk. They tend to exchange comments, remarks, observations on trivial and irrelevant topics and events. Very often they have nothing new to say, so they keep repeating the same story again and again. What are they talking about? Mainly about what they are interested in e.g. illnesses, worries, holidays, children, cars, hobbies etc. They ceaselessly comment on events or people using such phrases as "how interesting", "fantastic", "marvellous", "very good" exchanging mutual praises. Of course it is difficult to keep silent, especially when the subject or news is so interesting that we want to share it with everybody. Talkativeness is the most mechanical need, therefore keeping silent is the most difficult of all forms of abstention. For this reason a rule of total silence in many monasteries must be obeyed. Such continuous chatter means people do not have time for reflection, meditation and what is most important they do not have time to listen and understand other people. Some people find it very difficult to

accept the fact that they talk unnecessarily, especially persons who regard themselves as serious, responsible or even taciturn^a.

A need to teach others

Gurdjieff wrote that man has a strong psychological need to bring others to reason, correct their behaviour, guide them in life and tell them what they should do. Practically everybody, old and young, man and woman has developed this characteristic. This peculiarity originates from the fact that nobody from the earliest years of their life is able to see their own defects and abnormalities, but is able to see these same abnormalities and defects in others. In this way Beelzebub tells his grandson: "It has already become customary there at the present time that all your favourites always teach others like themselves things, the notion of which they have not even dreamt of, and the joke of it is that if these others do not learn from him, or at least, do not pretend that they wish to learn, then they are not only offended, but even always inwardly very sincerely indignant"⁴⁰.

Love

Everybody would agree that love is the most precious feeling that man can possess. In the last century the word 'love' entered our everyday language and we use it profusely. This word sells books, cinema tickets, newspapers and journals, videos and DVD's. We say that we love our spouses, partners, family, friends, country, God and many other things. However it is not clear to us what is the true meaning of this word, what love really is? The word 'love' is devalued because very often it is replacing the much more common word 'like'. Gurdjieff maintained that we do not truly understand this word because we never experience genuine, impartial and non-egoistic love. He stated that we do not know genuine love because we are unable to consider externally other people, we are unable to give full attention to others, and as a result of having many changing "I's". Although everybody needs love, we are unable to give it to others in our present state of consciousness. When answering his students' question "what place has love in your system?", he said: "With ordinary love goes hate. I love this, I hate that. Today I love you, next week, or next hour, or next minute, I hate you. ... As we are we cannot love. We love because something in ourselves combines with another's emanations; this starts pleasant associations, perhaps because of chemico-physical emanation from the instinctive centre, emotional centre, or intellectual centre; or it may be from influences of an external form; or from feelings - I love you because you love me, or because you don't love me; suggestions of others; sense of superiority; from pity; and for many other reasons, subjective and egoistic. ... There is the

^a A strong need to talk very often results from our strong need to feel safe. We have an inborn conviction, that a person whom we are talking to will not be able to hurt or kill us. The purpose of social conversation is not always to pass factual information, but transmit our attitude to the other person, our interest in this person, our esteem or disrespect. We know that we feel most offended when another person ignores us and does not reply to our question or greetings on purpose.

love of sex, which is ordinarily known as "love" between men and women... There is love of feeling, which evokes the opposite and makes people suffer. Later we talk about conscious love"⁴¹

Gurdjieff talked very little about real love because according to him it is beyond the reach of ordinary people. However he did not disparage the importance of love. On the contrary - he believed that love is the most important human feeling and that all human relations should be based on genuine love. Once he said "All life needs love. ... Begin by loving plants and animals, then perhaps you will learn to love people"⁴².

Illusion of consciousness and effectiveness

The notion of free will and the perception of true reality have been under deliberation by many thinkers since ancient Greece. Plato questioned our ability to see the real world and maintained that man, in his natural state, is like sitting in a cave, chained to the wall with his back to the cave entrance. Outside the cave there is a light of the Endless Reality, but man facing the wall can see on it only shadows of reality, never true reality. Man is so fascinated by these pictures, that he builds a great system of science and philosophy, which in reality is based on these illusive shadows. Shadows represent here subjective pictures of reality formed by us, while the light represents the Objective Reality.

In Western philosophy, in the 17th century, Spinoza was the first who undermined the existence of man's free will. He considered that man lives under the illusion of freedom because his actions are determined by elements he is unaware of. He was the first to introduce the concept of unconscious to the analyses of man's behaviour. Freud did not have any illusions about man's free will either. Fromm presenting Freud's idea stated: "Man, so proud of his freedom to think and to choose is, in fact, a marionette moved by strings behind and above him which in turn are directed by forces unknown to his consciousness. In order to give himself the illusion that he acts according to his own free will, man invents rationalisation which make it appear as if he does what he has to do because he has chosen to do so for rational or moral reasons."⁴³

Gurdjieff questions the possession of free will by man much more thoroughly and his conclusions are much more radical than that of the thinkers before him. He strongly believed that man is living in a state of hypnotic sleep and he compared the functioning of man to a robot^a. He maintained that man possesses deeply rooted illusions about his own possibilities. The greatest illusion is the belief that he can do what he really wants to i.e. that he possesses a free will. According to Gurdjieff only a man who has a higher level of consciousness and who has developed a true and only one "I" that is controlling his life could have a free will. Such a description of man's possibilities is very pessimistic and removes man from the pedestal where he has put himself.

In order to illustrate the state of humankind Gurdjieff told an Eastern tale about a magician, who had many sheep. The magician was very stingy and did not want to spend money on shepherds or on building a fence

^a Gurdjieff used a term 'machine'.

around the pastures. The sheep often ran away because they knew that the magician kept them for their meat and skins. Eventually the magician found a solution to the problem. He hypnotised the sheep and suggested to them that they were immortal, that he cared about them, and if anything at all was going to happen to them it would happen in the future and therefore they would have nothing to worry about. He hypnotised them for so long that they believed that they were lions, eagles or even men. After hypnotising all his sheep his problems disappeared and the sheep quietly waited to be slaughtered⁴⁴.

This story is a good illustration of the present situation of man. This is a tale about the strength of our imagination that hypnotises us. It is our imagination that causes us to live as if in a dream and to acquire extraordinary beliefs about ourselves. We are convinced that we are able to make decisions regarding our lives and that we can choose our life path. Unfortunately we are unable to notice that we operate automatically like robots, that everything is "happening" to us without our active participation, even our own life. Our imagination is so strong that although experience shows that the reality is different, we continue to believe that we are these lions and eagles. We are unable to break this magic circle and see that it is our own imagination that is keeping us in the state of lying, pretending and false perception of our situation.

As a result of their imagination people are convinced that they are good, caring, honest, tolerant etc. and these beliefs are so strong that they replace true appraisal of themselves. People create, for their own benefit, a picture, for example, of a good husband or wife, tolerant parents, a good worker, a charitable person or a hard businessman. Behind these pictures very often an entirely different person is hiding, whom, although it is us, we do not know at all. The formed image is practically indestructible and does not allow us to discover ourselves. Only a great life crisis such as war, or serious illness can liberate us from this imaginary picture.

Gurdjieff stressed that imagination can destroy our motivation to improve ourselves. Why should we change if we do not see any need for it. We will start working on change only then, when we see our true picture, our true behaviour and we lose all our illusions about ourselves. But we lose our illusion when we start working on ourselves. This looks like a situation without a solution.

It is interesting to mention that in the writings of the Christian church we can find a more realistic judgement of human possibilities. For example St. Paul in the letter to the Romans gives this description of the twofold human nature "For that which I do I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I", " For the good that, I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do". "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me"⁴⁵.

A similar judgement can be found in the writings of St. Augustine. He stated that man is not capable of doing anything good, even if he tries very hard. Man has not got a free will to do good and therefore man's redemption depends exclusively on God's grace, that is a gift of the Creator. God gives grace to some people independently of their merits. It does not matter what people do, how well have behaved; without the grace of God they cannot obtain redemption. According to Kolakowski, a well known Polish philosopher and

writer, the St Augustine's doctrine was unofficially treated by the Catholic Church as a heresy and removed from the church's teachings, because it was against the church's interest to propagate such a pessimistic picture of man⁴⁶. In the context of Gurdjieff's teaching God's grace could be regarded as a gift of objective consciousness that could change the nature of man.

Essence and personality

Gurdjieff describes man's psyche by identifying two independent elements: essence and personality. Essence is the inborn and personality is the acquired part of man's character during his development. In a small child his personality has not yet been formed, therefore his essence is responsible for his behaviour. His desires, inclinations, likes and dislikes reveal his essence. Personality, as we know, is formed through the complex process of education, upbringing and imitation of others. The contents of our conscious and unconscious memory, level of language development, received impressions and experienced feelings, exert a continual influence on our personality. One could say that essence represents man's true nature, and personality his external appearance.

Essence is usually only manifested in man's instincts and in his simplest emotions. There are very rare cases, however when a man's essence grows in parallel with his personality⁴⁷. In such situation it may influence man's moral principles, his attitude to other people and life, perception of justice and value of human life. It is responsible for such actions as searching for the meaning and purpose of life on Earth. Educated man, living apart from nature in the artificial conditions of civilisation, develops his personality at the cost of the essence. As the personality is developing and expanding, the essence stops growing and remains on the primitive level of, for example, a five year old child. As a result of this retarded development the essence is very rudimentary, wild and childish, expresses itself very rarely and very weakly. Therefore, in an adult, only personality is visible to the outside world.

Development of essence is a very complex process, because it not only depends on man's level of consciousness but it is also linked to man's character and his inborn abilities. For example, people who have a strong character and are not easily influenced by other people, have a better chance to develop their essence. It is more likely that people living close to nature, would have a more conducive environment in which to develop their essence. They are normally less "cultured" and do not have what we call "social skills", because they are separated from the influence of society. However it does not mean that a simple man living close to nature is a better man than the educated and cultured one. If the level of consciousness of such people is low, it is quite the opposite. An underdeveloped and unrefined personality does not provide a guarantee for a better character. Such people are very often full of cruelty, superstitions, greed, lust and prejudice.

It might be possible that essence of some exceptional men could reveal itself through their work. For example, in very artistically talented people their essence could manifest itself in their creative work, mainly poetry, music and paintings because this kind of art is least influenced by their personalities.

Sometimes there could arise a conflict between essence and personality. The personality could have different interests and liking than the essence. The personality can like something or try to achieve something that essence is unable to accept, and as a result they could start fighting each other. The problem is that the essence knows what it wants, but is unable to express it, because it has not got any means of communication with personality. The personality, when it has different aims than the essence, will act by using its own methods, and since it is dominant, it usually wins. However, after the confrontation, both parts must coexist, although very often they hate each other. When the personality for example, is trying to gain power or fame by employing such methods as cheating, fraud or murder that cannot be accepted by the essence. In this situation the essence could cause some mental disorder after the personality has achieved its aim.

Sometimes dominance of personality may disappear during the period of a serious crisis or personal misfortune. In wartime, for example, when people experience immense suffering and stress, they might forget about their own narrow-minded attitudes. Then their personality may take second place and their essence play the dominant role. In such situations people stop being egoistic and start helping each other. A similar situation could arise during a serious illness, when the influence of personality decreases and the essence takes the leading role and forgives other people any offences committed against us. Following recovery from the illness, the personality returns to its dominant position and our life continues as usual.

There is a close connection between the development of individual personalities and the development of civilisations. Every civilisation arises as a result of the action of personalities of many people. We could say that in our civilisation our lives, sciences, philosophy, morality and arts were created by a sum of personalities of many groups of people. On the other hand, civilisation through education and other direct influences helps to shape the personalities of young people and in that way secures the continuity and the durability of the existence of civilisation.

In the author's opinion essence also has an influence on the development of civilisations, but its contribution is much more subtle. During the last two centuries, the development of the essence in a certain influential group of people resulted in radical change of our attitude to slavery, rights of women, homosexuality, racism, socially deprived people and many other issues. In the last century essence has been responsible for the pacifistic movement and protection of the environment such as by the Greenpeace movement. Essence fights against cruelty to animals and demands the proper care of children. Essence prompts us to do charity work or to help people with special needs. Essence is closely linked with the increase of man's consciousness, especially collective consciousness. The importance of the influence of essence can be illustrated by analysing systems without essence. The communist system, for example, was based only on

people's personality and essence exerted minimal influence on life. The communist system not only did not appreciate essence, but it was purposefully removing it from daily life. As a result of this attitude, the communist system completely disintegrated after seventy years. Thus, a social system that ignores people's essence, cannot be stable and will degenerate because man cannot function without the values originating from the essence.

"Being"

Gurdjieff introduced a new concept summarising man's and other creatures' living and he called it "being"⁴⁸. More generally, being describes the totality of existence of living and inanimate matter on Earth. This concept spans a multitude of levels and different categories of all possible types of being. However it is important to notice that there is a big difference between the idea of existence and being. A stone exists, a plant exists and a man exists, but the being of a stone, plant and man is on completely different levels. Man's being describes his mental processes, culture, perceptions, feelings, moral rules and behaviour - his totality. Man is born as a developing creature, while the being of plants or animals is determined by their genes and environment. Development of man progresses slowly, and during this time he acquires a certain knowledge and several features that form his being.

Man's being is determined by many factors, e.g. by his many different "I's", by his level of consciousness and by the quality of work of his centres. Man's being describes, in effect, what man is in reality and therefore is also dependent on his essence. This explains why it is so difficult for a man to change his being. Everybody understands that the knowledge of one man can be different from the knowledge of another man, but it is difficult to comprehend that the being of one man could be completely different from the being of another man. For example, the being of type one man is completely different from the being of type two or type three man. It is difficult for people to accept the fact that beings of two people can differ more than the being of a plant from the being of an animal.

How does the being of man affect his life? One could say that the level of being determines the quality of his life. Similar types of being of people attract similar kinds of life situations, e.g. selection of similar friends and spouses, similar personal problems, similar kinds of decisions etc. Therefore, if we want to change our life, we have to change our being. Changing external conditions and surroundings like moving to a different town or winning a lot of money on the lottery will not change our life because our being stays the same. It might be easier to understand this fact if we consider the life of animals. The being of a horse attracts one kind of existence and the being of a dog attracts another kind of existence. The different types of existence result from the difference between their beings. It is obvious that by changing the surroundings or conditions of a horse or dog will not change their kind of life. People do not realise that their life path is determined by their being. They think that they can easily change their lives, they can be what they want, and only other unfriendly people or bad luck is responsible for their situation and failures.

Man's being also attracts a certain kind of behaviour. Man usually undertakes actions aimed at achieving positive effects, obviously according to his perception of what is good. In general, with the exception of psychopathic or mentally disturbed states, man does not try, on purpose, to harm other people who are not offensive to him.^a However man is acting accordingly to his being which is telling him what is good and what is bad. For example, a thief might be stealing because it is necessary to support himself and his family, a revolutionist might be killing people opposing him because he believes that by such an action he will improve the life of other people, and he is doing this for the love of humankind. Likewise an inquisitor could be torturing and burning people alive in the belief that he is doing this to save the souls of sinners and to protect others against heresy. One could say that we are all motivated to perform good deeds, but what is good is relative and depends on the person's being.

Knowledge, understanding and being

At present, people equate the possession of knowledge with understanding and cannot grasp the difference between these two concepts. People are full of admiration for those who possess a lot of knowledge and never question their understanding because they believe that knowledge automatically gives understanding. The fact is that crystallisation of understanding is one of the most complex human processes. Gurdjieff often said, "You do not understand what understanding means", and he tried to explain it this way, "Understanding is the essence obtained from information intentionally learned and from all kinds of experiences personally experienced"^b 49.

The difference between knowledge and understanding was known to esoteric teachings. Farid Ud-Din Attar, a Sufi poet and mystic, who lived in the 12th century wrote this about understanding in his great philosophical poem "The Conference of the Birds":

" After the valley of which I have spoken, there comes another - The Valley of Understanding, which has neither beginning nor end. No way is equal to this way, and the distance to be travelled to cross it is beyond reckoning. Understanding, for each traveller, is enduring; but knowledge is temporary. The soul, like the body, is in a state of progress or decline; and the Spiritual way reveals itself only in the degree to which the traveller has overcome his faults and weaknesses, his sleep and his inertia, and each will approach nearer to his aim according to his effort. Even if a gnat were to fly with all its might could it equal the speed of the wind? There are different ways of crossing this Valley, and all birds do not fly alike. Understanding can be

^a This statement refers to serious offences such as murder or grievous bodily harm. In everyday life we are subjected to many unpleasant and undeserved attacks. They are normally caused by the low culture and negative emotions of the aggressive person.

^b Author believes that understanding also depends on the inherited characteristics and the contents of the unconscious.

arrived at variously- some have found the Mihrab^a, others the idol. When the sun of understanding brightens this road each receives light according to his merit and he finds the degree assigned to him in the understanding of truth. When the mystery of the essence of being reveals itself clearly to him the furnace of this world becomes a garden of flowers.It is necessary to have a deep and lasting wish to become as we ought to be in order to cross this difficult valley"⁵⁰.

Gurdjieff maintained that knowledge on its own is not sufficient for attaining understanding. Knowledge is the function of the intellectual centre, while understanding is the outcome of the common work of at least two centres, e.g. intellectual and emotional. Using only one centre, e.g. intellectual, does not secure a proper understanding because man has to feel and sense what is connected with understanding. Using only the emotional centre is even more unreliable because it is not possible to check if the process of understanding has proceeded correctly. Only when the other centres are included in the process it is possible to achieve full understanding.

Walsh, one of the outstanding pioneers of the transpersonal movement wrote, "Western philosophers usually assume that intellectual training and analysis alone provide the royal road to understanding. However, transpersonal philosophers- especially those of Asian tradition such as Vedanta, Sankhya, Buddhism and Taoism - think differently. They emphasise that while intellectual training is necessary, by itself it is not sufficient for deep understanding"⁵¹.

In simple practical work people can clearly see the difference between knowledge and skills because they are aware that to know something does not automatically mean to be able to do it. For example, we all know how to drive a nail into a brick wall, but very often we are unable to do it properly and the nail is bent.

Understanding that can be attained by man is limited and can only reach a certain level. Gurdjieff explained that understanding is the product of two components: the depth of knowledge and the level of being of man. It means that if man's level of being or knowledge is low, than his understanding will be limited. To be more precise, we could say that the depth of understanding does not grow with increased knowledge. It can only change when the level of being grows simultaneously with knowledge, therefore it is the level of our being that conditions our understanding. So the only way to gain a better understanding is to improve our being. Of course, to acquire understanding of a practical or scientific nature, higher mathematics, or theoretical physics we do not need to change our being. However if we want to achieve understanding of our psyche, esoteric knowledge, the purpose of man's existence and his possibilities, and how to change ourselves, in other words if we want to understand ourselves, we have to perfect our being.

We may sometimes notice the influence of being on understanding when we reconsider the same situation or problem after a certain period of time. We might notice that our understanding has changed, although our knowledge of the facts is the same. For example, at one time we might have believed that spending

^a Niche in a Mosque pointing to Mecca.

taxpayers' money to rehabilitate drug addicts was a waste, but after a few years we strongly believe in a need for this type of help. Assuming that we have not in the mean time acquired additional information, this change in our conviction occurs as a result of the change of our being.

The level of our being influences our understanding because it also depends on many of our different "I's". Each "I" possesses only a small, germane part of knowledge and understands it in its particular way. However man's understanding is a sum of the understanding of all individual "I's". When our "I's" do not work together or when they hold opposing opinions, then there is the possibility of conflict between different "I's" and as a result man's understanding will decrease.

There is a further restriction on gaining full understanding. To obtain full understanding we need access to full knowledge and therefore partial knowledge will always result in partial understanding. Understanding is based on the association and integration of different parts of knowledge as a whole. Because of the limitation of man's abilities and the vast amount of knowledge - including as yet undiscovered knowledge - nobody can attain whole knowledge, therefore nobody can gain full understanding. This situation of man is well illustrated by a parable about three blind men describing an elephant. One is touching its trunk and says that the elephant is a snake, the second is touching the leg and says that the elephant is a tree, the third is touching the tail and says that the elephant is a rope. In general we are aware that we do not possess full knowledge, and there is even a saying "a little knowledge is more harmful than no knowledge". This may happen when people have only partial knowledge, but not being aware of this, gives us a false feeling of security and results in flawed understanding and harmful use of knowledge^a.

To maximise our understanding, it is important to maintain a balance between the level of knowledge and of being. In the confines of a certain level of being the usefulness of knowledge cannot be increased and only accumulation of information of the same nature is possible. When a big spread between knowledge and being exists, understanding is very difficult to achieve. When only knowledge is increasing it becomes sterile, theoretical, obstructing or even harmful. Instead of serving man and helping people in their fight for a better life, it starts to complicate their lives causing trouble and unhappiness.

One-sided acquisition of knowledge results in a person who knows a lot, but does not understand what he knows, and as a result of this he is unable to apply this knowledge for the benefit of other people. For example, a scientist whose being is undeveloped, in spite of his extensive knowledge and possibilities to use this knowledge, might spend all his life investigating some phenomena inconsequential to people, such as: the love songs of a species of bird, or the sex life of a beetle, instead of working on an important project that could help humankind. On the other hand a high level of being without knowledge can create a stupid saint

^a For many years scientists were convinced about the safety of many products such as asbestos, DDT, lead and others used in the agriculture and food industry. An increase in our knowledge resulted in outlawing the usage or the substantial reduction of acceptable safe amounts of many chemicals. In the mean time a lot of damage was done to people being exposed to these products.

or a do-gooder, who wants to help other people, but he does not know in what way and how to set about it. In the history of mankind there are known incidents of the decline of nations or even civilisations as a result of a distorted balance between the knowledge and the being of the society. This happened in the Soviet Union where knowledge dominated being, or in Tibet where being dominated knowledge^a.

Understanding depends on the personal experience, knowledge and the individual work of a person, therefore it is our own exclusive possession. It is practically impossible to pass this possession on to other people and Gurdjieff illustrated this problem saying: "...if my own beloved brother were to come to me here at this moment and urgently entreat me to give him merely a tenth part of my understanding, and if I myself wished with my whole being to do so, yet I could not, in spite of my most ardent desire, give him even the thousandth part of this understanding, as he has neither the knowledge nor the experience which I have quite accidentally acquired and lived through in my life". "It is a hundred times easier, as it is said in the Gospel, 'for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle', than for anyone to give to another the understanding formed in him about anything whatsoever".⁵²

The impossibility of conveying understanding to other persons is for many people beyond their comprehension because our civilisation is based on passing information to other people. How could we say that all these books we have read and television programmes we have watched did not give us understanding? However, from our own experience we remember that many times we tried to convince our friends or strangers using logical arguments, and we failed. Why were we so unsuccessful? The fact is that there is no quantity of information and strength of persuasion that will convince other persons to change their firmly rooted political, religious, ethical or social beliefs. As a result of this situation, society is divided into different social groups and political parties, having similar understanding. Understanding of members of these groups will stay the same for many years, and can even be transmitted from generation to generation. The existence of different understandings of the same phenomena causes deep divisions in society, resulting in a lack of co-operation, antagonism and even hostility between groups, and in general is detrimental for social development and for working towards the common good.

In Western societies people attach great importance to the level of man's knowledge, but they do not see the necessity for attaining understanding and, what is worse, they are not worried about it. A man, who possesses a large encyclopaedic knowledge, who uses new and "clever" terminology is automatically deemed to understand a great deal. Gurdjieff maintained that if people do not understand something, they usually try to find a name to describe it. Once they have found a name they reckon that they understand it⁵³. The process of inventing new names pervades practically every sphere of man's activity. Many such new names can be found in astronomy, e.g. black holes, big bang, black matter, antigravitation etc., which describe theoretical phenomena, but we really do not know their true meaning.

^a Excluding the contribution of the specific geo-political situation in this region.

Chapter 2

Why is man like this?

It is not necessary to convince anybody that the picture presented by Gurdjieff is true; everybody can observe the described characteristics and behaviour of man whose struggle with his problems, and his suffering, is widely known. Even if some of the presented psychological explanations and models are not fully convincing, we should not have any doubts that the presented general picture reflects true existential problems of man. Gurdjieff believed that solely a critical approach to man's behaviour, as used by many reformers and philosophers, was not sufficient to achieve noticeable changes of man's character and would not result in any long-term improvement of his life. To help man's development process it is necessary to fully understand the causes of our psychological conditions. Thus, besides the criticism, Gurdjieff provides answers to the question "Why is man like he is?"

Many people in the past asked similar questions e.g. why is there so much evil on Earth? Because they assumed that man possessed full consciousness, free will and full control of his life, they blamed causes such as man's low level of education, his low standard of living, or economical and political systems for his plight. In other words they were looking for the causes outside of man. As a result of such reasoning, they looked for solutions on how to improve man's existence also outside of man, for example, by improving his education, changing the law or replacing existing socio-economic systems.

Gurdjieff stated that people themselves are predominantly responsible for their suffering and problems, and he identified two main causes that determine man's behaviour. The first cause is beyond man's control because it is determined by his psychological constitution and is symbolised by an organ called kundabuffer. The second cause depends totally on people themselves and could be described by a process called education. In this context education includes all external influences acting on a child during his period of development i.e. methods of upbringing, education at home, school and by the media.

Organ kundabuffer

Gurdjieff gives a very unexpected and surprising answer to the central question "Why is man like this?". Our psyche and our behaviour result from the action of "higher forces" that are beyond man's comprehension. Like most concepts included in "Beelzebub's Tales" the explanation is presented in the form of a symbolic legend transmitting key points of Gurdjieff's teachings without going into unnecessary realistic details.

A very long time ago, when the solar system was still being formed, as a result of an erroneous calculation of a certain Sacred Individual, who dealt with matters of world maintenance and world creation, a large comet called Kondoor hit the Earth and broke off two large pieces that started to circle the Earth and later

came to be called Moon and Anulios. This unexpected disaster caused our Creator to send the Great Archangel Sakaki to investigate the situation and to introduce necessary remedies. Sakaki arrived at the conclusion that the position of the Moon and Anulios could be stabilised only if they started to receive the sacred vibrations called askokin. Because askokin is normally released upon the death of living bodies, Sakaki brought living organisms to the Earth from other parts of the Universe. These organisms started to develop, to multiply and to die. At the time of death their material component stayed on the Earth, but askokin was sent to the Moon.

Much later, man appeared on Earth. Man could not only deliver large quantities of askokin, but he had potential for the acquisition of Objective Reason that would enable him to perceive true reality. To check the situation, the Archangel Sakaki came to Earth again and concluded that if human beings were to attain Objective Reason in the future, as anticipated, they would prematurely comprehend the reason for their presence on Earth, they would understand that they were the slaves of circumstances and the purpose of their existence was to fulfil cosmic objectives. Sakaki was afraid that if people fully realised their role, they would comprehend that their lives were hopeless and full of suffering, that it was senseless to fight against "higher forces", and therefore they might commit mass suicide. If this situation arose, it would reduce the amount of askokin sent to the Moon and the stability of the planets in the solar system would be affected. To prevent this happening Sakaki decided to implant in man an organ called kundabuffer. This organ, placed at the base of their spine, caused a substantial change of man's psyche. People started to perceive reality "upside down" and they started to find pleasure in a variety of physical and psychological stimuli. The development of man's Objective Reason stopped immediately and people started to behave as if under the influence of opium and to live as if in a hypnotic trance. So, what Sakaki implemented worked very well and man served the Moon without any disturbances whatsoever. When the cosmic crisis was over and there was no need to stabilise the Moon, the organ kundabuffer was superfluous and was immediately removed.

This legend must not be taken literally, it is a kind of parable, but it helps us to understand the origins of our problems. It tells us that the described defects of man do not result from his own fault, but are linked to man's biological constitution, his inborn psyche and mental abilities. In other words the origin of our problems depends on our characteristics developed as a result of man's evolution^a.

In one possible interpretation of this legend Moon represents consciousness, Anulios, invisible to man, represents the unconscious part of his psyche, and the cosmic catastrophe - the loss of higher consciousness. For proper development and functioning, consciousness and subconscious need special "food" - or as Gurdjieff called it "influences", and these influences must be produced by people. In a certain period of human development the generation of the correct influences was blocked by events that were beyond man's

^a According to Gurdjieff the process of evolution was not based on the principles described by Darwin. See Chapter 8.

control, until his consciousness and subconscious had stabilised. These events caused man to lose the knowledge of the type of influences that were needed for his development, and in this way he lost the possibility of perfecting himself.

There is also a possible religious interpretation of this story. It describes the history of man's Fall and it corresponds to the rise of original sin and the loss of Paradise. The organ kundabuffer, like original sin, is the cause of our fall. In Christian theology original sin is responsible for all the evil on Earth and man's damnation. According to Gurdjieff's teaching, the implantation of the organ kundabuffer had an equally dramatic outcome because it caused man to lose the possibility of attaining higher consciousness and Objective Reason. This is equivalent to the expulsion from Paradise, because the lack of higher consciousness and Objective Reason is the main cause of our "sins", our bad deeds and all the evil on Earth. The organ kundabuffer, like original sin, caused man to lose his chance of immortality^a.

Consequences of the organ kundabuffer

Gurdjieff stated that the removal of the organ kundabuffer had not resulted in the disappearance of its effects. This organ had formed the human character for many generations, and its effects were deeply rooted in human nature. It became the dominant factor shaping man's life, especially his mentality and beliefs.

The most harmful human traits resulting from the consequences of the organ kundabuffer include credulity and great susceptibility of man to suggestions. People started to accept fantasies as reality and to believe in almost anything others told them, especially if this information came from authorities. Today, susceptibility to suggestions is visible in the extraordinary influence of television, newspapers and other media on the formation of people's beliefs. Man's gullibility is confirmed by the incredible efficacy of commercial advertisements. The sales of cosmetics, slimming supplements, medical remedies etc. are greatly affected by television advertisements, although there may be no proof whatsoever of their effectiveness. People buy goods such as cars, food, dresses, books, CD's, etc. because somebody suggests it. It is so common that we are not aware of it.

Besides this, we believe many other people. We believe medical practitioners who declare that medicines will cure us, we trust politicians who promise that they will improve our standard of living, we believe priests when they say that we will go to heaven. From early childhood we are constantly subjected to a stream of suggestions. They come from parents, family, friends or people who have the air of authority. If we could objectively analyse our decisions and choices, we could see that most of these are based on information that we have never checked. Of course, in practice, we are unable to check everything, but we should be careful in selecting whom we should trust, e.g. only proven, reliable and independent institutions and advisers who do not gain any financial benefits from our decisions.

^a Immortality is discussed in Chapter 8.

The worst form of suggestibility manifests itself in the psychology of a crowd. A crowd of people is easy, by skilful manipulators to incite to extreme behaviour, for example to lynch somebody who is suspected of having committed an appalling crime, to start a riot, or to exterminate an ethnic minority. The most evident example of man's susceptibility to suggestions is shown by events in the Third Reich, where a highly cultured and civilised society believed in what Hitler said.

On account of the organ kundabuffer, man's main life goals are driven by egoism, vanity, pride, envy etc. Therefore the main ambition of most of the population is to secure ownership of valuable material goods, and often people work all their lives to attain this. The possession of a bigger house, a better car, going on an expensive holiday, often makes us oblivious to the importance of spiritual development and the need to help others. Vanity forces us to strive for high positions, awards, high social status and popularity, to gain the esteem of our friends and colleagues. We buy many things to show off or not to feel worse than others. In the States it is so common that they have a saying "keeping up with the Joneses".

The chase after ephemeral happiness and pleasures becomes man's main objective. The modern meaning of the word "happiness" is limited to the possession of money that can buy everything we want, amusements and sex. Entertainment provided by television, films, watching sport and computer games has become modern man's opium and already from childhood a large part of society is addicted to it. Naturally sex had always been popular, but now it has become the most accessible type of entertainment and is often deprived of any personal feelings.

Gurdjieff has always emphasised that the worst consequence of the organ kundabuffer was the expansion of mutual killings of people. Most of the written and unwritten history of mankind is the history of wars and destruction. Many of man's described characteristics contribute to frequent outbreaks of wars, but the most dominant is susceptibility to suggestion, especially in democratic societies. In modern society it is necessary to prepare people for war, to get their support. However, to obtain their support it is necessary to persuade them that there is an aggressor and enemy, that their life and well-being might be in danger, and to instil in them a feeling of patriotism. It is necessary to convince them that war is justified, even necessary, but mainly that is needed to secure peace^a. When people are convinced that a particular war is justified, they will take part in it as if in a hypnotic trance.

Some psychological characteristics that originated from the introduction of the organ kundabuffer are very important, or even necessary, for the normal functioning of man. We are all aware that we may die at any moment. But there is an interesting question. Can man imagine his own death? Gurdjieff maintained that man can imagine the death of other people but never his own⁵⁴. Of course we realise that, eventually we will die one day, but emotionally we perceive this event as unreal, almost not relevant to ourselves. This feeling was well captured by Proust:

^a A good example of this process can be observed when analysing the preparation of American society by president G.W.Bush in 2002/2003 for the war with Iraq.

"We may, indeed, say that the hour of death is uncertain, but when we say this we think that hour as situated in a vague and remote expanse of time; it does not occur to us that it can have any connection with the day that has already dawned and can mean that death - or its first assault and partial possession of us, after which it will never leave hold of us again - may occur this very afternoon, so far from uncertain, this afternoon whose timetable, hour by hour, has been settled in advance"⁵⁵.

Let us consider what would be the condition of a person who could fully imagine his own death. Such an individual would exist in a state of continuous fear and stress and would be unable to function normally. All his attention would be focused on the approaching death. When we consider that even our daily problems such as illness, lack of money, unhappy love, not enough recognition by others or marital problems, could cause us such overwhelming stress and suffering that they could even lead to suicide, it is odd that the thought of disappearing from this world for eternity, the thought that we will not see our loved ones and friends any more, does not cause substantial anxiety. The notion that people are unable to imagine their own death could be supported, for example, by the way they drive cars. Many people drive much too fast or under the influence of alcohol causing accidents and killing themselves, although everybody knows that driving a car under this conditions is extremely dangerous.

A similar situation can be observed during a war when soldiers in direct combat see their colleagues being killed around them, but they are not paralysed by fear and fulfil their duties^a. Such people are treated like heroes because we think that they have conquered their fear, but there probably exists in man a psychological mechanism that blocks fear and prevents people from realising that they could die.

We know that people who are mortally ill e.g. with cancer or AIDS, and are aware that they will soon die, do not live in constant terror, although everything that is important to them has lost its sense and value. Money, fame and pleasure become insignificant when we know that we are going to die. Such a situation can often change people's attitude to life and to other people, and if they manage to recover they become a different person. Even if we could know for sure that we are going to die in five or ten years' time, this knowledge would affect us strongly. Considering this we could come to the conclusion that an average person cannot be aware of his own death because he would stop to function normally. We could say that probably as a result of this mythical organ kundabuffer people do not suffer terrifying fear when they are facing death. Using a more down to earth approach, we could say that the lack of awareness of our own death was given to us by Nature.

We could try to find a more scientific explanation for the above phenomena. Dr. Lilly, for example, a well known American psychologist, postulated the existence of bio-computer programmes in the human mind

^a The opinion that soldiers fulfil their duties because they are afraid of court-martial is not supported by the analysis of behaviour of man during combat. The fact that many countries dropped the death penalty for desertion after the First World War did not significantly influence the level of desertion during the Second World War.

that are beyond man's control⁵⁶. His experiments with LSD helped him to identify a programme that was causing the self-destruction of man. Such a programme could be triggered as a result of extreme shock or an out of control response of the body to LSD. One could argue that other programmes could exist in man's brain that are activated during very dangerous situations or on approaching death.

Education

The behaviour and functioning of man are not only influenced by his inborn features. Gurdjieff maintained that people themselves are responsible for the existence of characteristics originally resulting from the operation of the organ kundabuffer. Children are not born with the fixed consequences of kundabuffer - contrary to the theological interpretation of original sin. It is the adults, corrupted by the consequences of the organ kundabuffer, who pass them to children during a broadly defined process of education that includes all the absorbed influences, teachings and the formation of a child's psyche from birth.

Gurdjieff described the modern process of education in this way: " A man comes into the world like a clean sheet of paper, which immediately all around him begin vying with each other to dirty and fill up with education, morality, the information we call 'knowledge', and with all kinds of feelings of duty, honour, conscience, and so on and so forth. And each and all claim immutability and infallibility for the methods they employ for grafting these branches onto the main trunk, called man's personality. The sheet of paper gradually becomes dirty, and the dirtier it becomes, that is to say, the more a man is stuffed with ephemeral information and those notions of duty, honour, and so on, which are dinned into him or suggested to him by others, the 'cleverer' and worthier is he considered by those around him. And seeing that people look upon his 'dirt' as merit, he himself inevitably comes to regard this same dirtied sheet of paper in the same light."⁵⁷

Gurdjieff in "Beelzebub's Tales" returns many times to the methods of upbringing and the development of psychological dispositions of children. He thoroughly criticised this process and believed that it is the main cause of mankind's predicament. In his opinion, parents are mainly responsible for the continuation and propagation of the consequences of the organ kundabuffer from generation to generation. Beelzebub said to his grandson: "To teach and to suggest to their children how to be insincere with others and deceitful in everything has become so ingrained in the beings of the planet Earth of the present time that it has even become their conception of their duty towards their children; and this kind of conduct towards their children they call by the famous word 'education'. They 'educate' their children never to be able and never to dare to do as the 'conscience' present in them instinctively directs, but only that which is prescribed in the manuals of 'bon ton' usually drawn up there just by various candidates for 'Hasnamusses'^a."⁵⁸

People who obey the principles of 'bon ton', which these days we call accepted social rules of behaviour, divide behaviour into two classes: so called decent and indecent. Western morality categorises as indecent talking to children about sexual behaviour, therefore children, instead of learning about possibly the most

^a Hasnamuss is described in Chapter 4

important topic for them from their parents, find out most of the information from their peers or pornographic publications and films. It is true that nowadays some schools provide basic sexual education, but it concentrates on the biological aspects ignoring very important psychological and social aspects. In some families there is a repressive attitude towards the sexuality of young people and this can sometimes result in sexual problems including deviation, perversion or even murder. When children educated in such a way grow up, they will behave as their parents did and in turn they will bring up their children in the same way.

Freud was convinced that the preparation of young people for living in a society is grossly inadequate and he wrote: "That the education of young people at the present day conceals from them the part which sexuality will play in their lives is not the only reproach which we are obliged to make against it. Its other sin is that it does not prepare them for the aggressiveness of which they are destined to become the objects. In sending the young out into life with such a false psychological orientation, education is behaving as though one were to equip people starting on a Polar expedition with summer clothing and maps of the Italian Lakes."⁵⁹

The fact that education is the key to the changes of society has been known since ancient times. Plato wrote that his ideal republic could be built if he could start working with newly born babies. Because children must be educated by adults, they will be spoilt. Thus totalitarian systems, such as Communist and Nazi, were very aware of this principle and put a lot of effort into reducing parental influences on children with a view to indoctrinating them in accordance with their own objectives. However it is interesting to note that in spite of the indoctrination of children over three generations, society in the Soviet Union did not assimilate any communist moral values, but rather drifted towards the most primitive forms of social relations and mastered a technique of hiding their true thoughts and feelings. So, as we learn now, their educational brainwashing was a failure.

The question arises "why is it so difficult to change the education system in a free society?". Orage explained it like this: "Many people today have intelligence superior to their conduct; they are free from superstition about religion, science, morals, and politics, but continue to be irrational about their children. They see the stupidities of the educational system, yet continue to bring their children up in it".⁶⁰ In a democratic society the mechanism of change is very complex and difficult to implement because decisions are made by the majority of people. In such a situation it is practically impossible to change anything because there is a tendency in the majority of population to avoid risks and therefore to avoid changes. The need for a change could be understood by a certain group of people, but they will be unable to pass their understanding to the rest of society.

Orage paints such a picture of contemporary education: "We have been told as children that to be rich is a happier state than to be poor; that people are superior or inferior according to their station in life, or their possession of charm, education or gifts such as a gift for writing, which is comparable to a wart or mole. We

are taught to believe that natural greatness is a condition of individual happiness, that amusements amuse, that distinguished company is brilliant, that other people's praise is necessary and that their disapproval is debilitating, that books, pictures, and music are stimulating, that leisure without work is desirable, that it is possible to do nothing, that fame, the possession of power, titles, success, have real value. ... We are victims of suggestibility, which is the mechanism of our psychology. We depend on reward and punishment, which are a necessary part of a young child's training- but we never grow up. We seldom acquire understanding through experience; always we look outside for understanding".⁶¹

It is difficult, or almost impossible, to change education methods because modern education is a socio-technique tool driven by society. Society decides which inborn characteristics, potential and abilities will be developed in children. Therefore from early childhood only a small part of our potential is developed, and only the part that is going to be useful to society. Western society develops mainly scientific and artistic abilities because only these are recognised as the most necessary for the functioning of society. Other features such as intuition and spiritual perception are treated in many cases as psychological disorders. For Western society exists only what can be weighed or measured. As a result of this attitude, there is a spiritual desert in the West, including in many religions that fulfil mainly social functions.

Orage described the results of modern education in this way: "We have almost no need to think; this is spared us by education, newspapers, books, radio and television^a. Everything is prepared for us; we are told what and how to do everything, about everything that happens on Earth; and all is conveyed to us by those who are devoid of real understanding, whose knowledge is partial and whose conclusions are therefore false. Real teaching is replaced by a mechanical exercise of memory, so that the bright boy or girl is one who, endowed with a photographic memory, can win prizes by passing examinations and intelligence tests, which, as everyone will admit in private, have almost no real value."⁶²

Modern society is interested in developing people only up to an average level.⁶³ Children below this level are helped, but children above this level are held back by the state educational system. The existence of this approach can be confirmed by a very difficult life at school of gifted children. Western society allows the development of two types of special abilities in children: aptitude for sport and artistic-entertaining talents, because society needs them for its own amusements, in spite of the fact that very intensive training and professional performance could damage the psychological and physical development of children.

At the present time education finishes where in antiquity it was starting, viz. at the age of 18-21. This is the most idealistic period in the life of young people, who are awaiting to discover the meaning of life and find their own goals. During this period young people are charged with electricity, but there is nobody who can direct them on what do with this energy. The main goals offered to young people by Western society are the pursuit of pleasure, accumulation of money, achieving a social position or to acquire power. As a result of

^a Television is added by the author. Orage wrote it before the advance of television.

this materialistic "life philosophy" some of the most idealistic youngsters become cynical, alcohol and drug addicts, or find outlets for their energy in unrestrained sexual behaviour.

Victor Frankl, a professor of neurology and psychiatry at Vienna University^a wrote more than 25 years ago about the 'existential vacuum' in the lives of young people, and explains it in this way: " Unlike an animal, man is no longer told by drives and instincts what he must do. And in contrast to man in former times, he is no longer told by traditions and values what he should do. Now, knowing neither what he must do nor what he should do, he sometimes does not even know what he basically wishes to do. Instead, he wishes to do what other people do - which is conformism - or he does what other people wish him to do - which is totalitarianism".⁶⁴

According to Frankl the existential vacuum is a type of a sociogenic neurosis manifesting itself by frustration and lack of purpose in life. He stated that up to 60% of his American students showed these symptoms. He believed that the existential vacuum is manifested much more in America than in Europe because the average American student is more indoctrinated by reductionist theories.^b

Almost everybody believes that we have a good education system. It must be so, because otherwise we would try to change it. However when we look closely at our education system we find that it was developed during the industrial revolution and is based on almost medieval methods, i.e. memorising huge amounts of information. It could be information about ancient Egypt or the industrial revolution or names of chemical compounds. We learn many things because it is generally believed that they should help us to live in society, they are useful or develop our mind, and as a final benefit, the possession of this information will bring happiness and satisfaction to our lives. Some of this knowledge could, of course, be useful, but to live a fulfilled life we need much more. At work knowledge is important, but more important is the ability to apply this knowledge, to continuously absorb new knowledge and to develop our curiosity to find out about new things. However our satisfaction and progress at work will, to a large extent, depend on our ability to interact with other people, on our ability to solve human problems and conflicts and on our skill to motivate others. Has anybody mentioned these topics at school or even University?

However, crucial to our happiness or unhappiness in life is the quality of our personal relations. How to relate to parents, how to treat children, how to choose the right partner, how to solve and how to avoid marital problems; these are only a few of the essential skills necessary to help us lead a happy life, to avoid stress and illness. The most important social function to be performed is the care and upbringing of children. We should spend a lot of our time with our children and give them our full attention, especially in the early period of their life. Has anybody at school explained to us how to do it? These are not trivial issues, but the

^a Victor Frankl was a founder of the third School of Psychotherapy in Vienna (after Freud and Adler)

^b Reductionism describes a man as a complex biochemical mechanism or an adaptive control system without any spiritual values.

most important duties to be fulfilled. Could we really accept that the present education system is meeting our genuine needs?

Gurdjieff saw many ludicrous conditions in our lives and maintained that the wrong education of children was the most fundamental cause of evil and suffering on Earth. The main mechanism of perpetuating the existing situation of human kind is the process of imitation of the behaviour of parents by their children. In this way children acquire the same mentality and attitudes as their parents. However, to educate children, first the parents must be properly educated. But this is a classical "chicken and egg" situation already identified by Plato. Gurdjieff shows us how to break this impasse and how to start the process of improvement. In his opinion this can only ensue from man's individual work on the development of his consciousness.

Education and the development of consciousness

Gurdjieff indicated that even at the present time people have inborn features that could enable them to acquire Objective Reason, but people are not aware of the existence of their properties and therefore are unable to develop them. He said that the sacred data put into them by Great Nature for the consciousness which they ought to have from the very beginning of their preparation for a responsible existence become isolated and evolve independently, and come to be regarded as subconscious.⁶⁵

As a result of the modern education process possibilities for the development of Objective Reason by young people have gradually disappeared. Nowadays it is very rare for them to acquire, on maturity, Reason that is proper for 'true man' - meaning the Reason that could potentially be achieved by man. It may happen only when a newly born child is separated from the influences of other people. Only then everything that is given by Nature, all the inborn features, could develop and grow with a child. This scenario is, however very unlikely to occur. It might happen that a young person could find a guide, who, by chance, has developed his own higher consciousness. This kind of teacher could help him to develop such characteristics that would enable him to go through life without identifying himself with worldly problems, and that would prevent enslavement of his mind by human passions. Therefore, according to Gurdjieff, to find a true teacher is the only way to break this endless parent-child chain of influences. Gurdjieff emphasised the importance of the right teacher by saying "Our Common Father Endlessness is only the Creator of a three-centred being. But the genuine creator of his essence during the period of his preparatory existence is his "oskianotsner" - that is, he whom your favourites on the planet Earth call 'educator' or 'teacher'."⁶⁶

Analogy between a man and a carriage, a coachman and a horse⁶⁷

Gurdjieff presented during one of his lectures, an analogy that served to illustrate the present situation of man as a result of the accepted and deeply rooted ways of upbringing and of our educational methods. Man's functioning could be compared to a carriage pulled by a horse and driven by a coachman. The carriage

represents man's body whose functioning is controlled by the moving and instinctive centres; the horse represents feelings and perception; the coachman represents consciousness and ways of thinking, and the person sitting in the carriage and giving orders represents man's "I" as it exists in a given moment.

The manifestation of thoughts and consciousness of an average person corresponds in almost every respect to the essence and behaviour of a typical hired coachman. Like all hired coachmen he is in general a "cabby", not entirely illiterate, because he attended some kind of school. Although he himself originates from a village, he looks down with contempt upon country people, because he rubs shoulders with the educated and rich town folk. He considers himself competent even in questions of religion, politics and sociology, he likes to argue with his equals, and to teach those whom he regards as his inferiors. He has learnt to be cunning and servile to superiors. He enjoys a good meal and the company of cooks and housemaids in the neighbourhood, drinking in a bar and spending leisure time dreaming and being lazy. He works only when he has to, i.e. "under the lash" or in the hope of a tip. He has learnt how to earn tips by lying or flattering. He has tried to look imposing by wearing a beard and padding his shoulders which, he feels make him appear more important.⁶⁸

The horse, in this analogy, represents the feelings and emotions of man, owing to the negligence suffered during its early years and to its solitude, being locked up within itself, its inner life hidden and its external life being nothing but inertia. The horse has never received any special education and lives under the fear of constant thrashing and abuse. Never having experienced any friendship and love, the horse will surrender itself completely to anybody for a moment of caress. As a consequence of all this the horse is deprived of all interests and aspirations and concentrates on food, drink and the opposite sex, and invariably veers in the direction where it can get any of these. Because it has not received any education at the proper time, the horse has not got any aspiration for a responsible existence. It carries out its obligations with complete indifference and only from fear of further beating.

As for the carriage, representing the body, the situation is even worse. It is made of many, often very special materials and is designed to transport all kinds of loads, not only passengers, and to travel on rough country roads and be subjected to many bumps and shocks. These shocks help the grease to spread properly to all the moving parts. Now it is travelling in the city on smooth, paved streets, and is hardly ever shaken, therefore the grease does not spread and the metal parts begin to rust and get overheated and eventually damaged. Our coachman- the cabby, has no inkling of how to grease the carriage, and even if he did attempt it, he would only blindly follow the directions of the first passer-by.

So, when this carriage that is used to smooth roads, has to go along a byroad and uneven path it begins to lose nuts, bolts or other parts, and eventually needs considerable repair. Although it can be nicely painted and decorated outside, inside it is weak and not suitable for normal functioning.

The interpretation of the condition of the carriage depends on the time and place we live. Nowadays people pay a lot of attention to the outside i.e. to external presentation. They spend considerable amounts of money

on clothes, cosmetics, plastic surgery or slimming aids. In spite of so much care, many people are overweight as a result of overindulgence and the wrong life style. Many also damage their bodies by smoking, alcohol and drug addiction. One could say that the body of contemporary man is like the above carriage - in very bad condition.

Passengers travelling in the carriage change at each journey, thus representing our continuously changing "I's". Such a passenger does not feel responsible for the coach, and therefore will not take care of its condition; he will not look after the horse and the coachman because he does not see any need for it. Only the owner would take care of the carriage, the horse and the coachman. The owner represents the man who has one true, unchanging "I", the man who has achieved the level of higher consciousness and Objective Reason.

Although these three parts of the "hackney carriage" work together and are linked together, i.e. the horse and carriage by the shaft, the horse by the reins to the coachman, and the coachman by his seat on the carriage, it is apparent that there is no clear communication and understanding between them. It might happen that the horse will come to understand the coachman's instructions and will develop some form of attachment to the coachman, but the trouble is that the coachman will not realise this, so there is no chance for the slightest mutual understanding. The coachman has little influence on the horse; at best he can pass to him, by means of the reins, just three concepts - right , left and stop.

Because contemporary man does not have either the knowledge or abilities to properly prepare future generations to life's responsibilities by taking care of all three parts, the "hackney carriage" does look very strange - a carriage nicely painted, but very weak, being pulled by a sickly horse and driven by an unshaved, dirty and half -asleep coachman, dressed in a shabby coat and wearing a top hat found in a rubbish bin. Modern man presents such a strange picture because the three parts that are contributing to his personality have been educated without understanding of their mutual interactions, and some have received very little attention. These parts were never taught how to work together, how to support each other, or to understand their needs to even the smallest degree. As a result of such an education there is no co-operation between these three elements.

This analogy illustrates the extensive shortcomings of modern education. Contemporary education concentrates on learning a large amount of information, on development of thinking, on a rational approach to problems, on preparation of people for their professional life. However, education is not concerned with the development of psychological aspects of man to prepare him to face personal problems in life. It is apparent that this knowledge and understanding should be available to people from their early days.

Analysing modern education methods we could say that they have not changed since the 19th century. What have changed are the contents of transmitted information, especially in the sciences. So far, people responsible for education in the West are not aware of the need for a comprehensive, versatile approach to

the education of young people, based on the development of all aspects of man's personality^a, and it looks like such a project will not be undertaken for quite a while. Unfortunately people are still convinced that what was good for them will likewise be good for their children.

Elements influencing the life of man⁶⁹

In Beelzebub's Tales Gurdjieff lists factors affecting man's life from the moment of conception. Some of these factors have been independently confirmed by scientific research, others are still awaiting to be discovered. These factors are as follows:

Heredity in general. We inherit not only from our father and mother, but from the whole of both families. Inherited characteristics depend on ones race and many are common for humanity as a whole. From the point of view of genetics man has a lot in common not only with the animal world but with plants as well - we are told that half of man's genes are the same as those in a banana plant.

Condition and environment at the moment of conception. These conditions include the physical and psychical state of the parents and their recent history. Their health affecting habits such as smoking, drugs and alcohol, as well as the intensity of their stresses. The geographical position, climate, environmental conditions such as air, water and soil pollution, and magnetic forces.

The combined radiation of the Sun and all the planets of the solar system. The latest research shows that during the magnetic storms on the Sun, a large number of particles of high energy arrive on the Earth. It can be assumed that all this radiation could have an influence on man's character, because it could cause the genetic mutation of DNA in the reproductive cells during conception and gestation. Variation of the intensity of the radiation arriving on the Earth is linked with the rotation of the Sun and the movement of the Earth around the Sun. Therefore the intensity of radiation is changing throughout the year and there is a possibility that the parents of people born under different signs of the zodiac receive different doses of radiation originating from the Sun. Radiation from the planets is less understood, but might include gravitational waves.

The level of being of parents and their influences on their children until they are attaining the age of maturity. It is now well understood and it has been proven that the behaviour of parents has an indisputable effect on the formation of a child's character. Their influence, especially the mother's, is most important, because a child's characteristics are formed during the first few years. Also, in the later period of a child's development, the influence of parents is very important, because, with the exception of the period of puberty, children normally imitate their parents.

^a Existing at present in Europe and America, Waldorf schools that started in 1919 are one of a very few examples of the application of new methods of education. This school is based on a programme prepared by Rudolf Steiner who introduced arts to education to develop a child's feeling, as well as its intellect.

The quality and level of being of people around them. The quality of being of people around a child also has an important effect on its development. We know how important for a child are caring grandparents, how influential are older brothers or sisters, and later its friends. During the schooling years a teacher can instigate the intellectual development of a child, its interest and future carrier. Nowadays film and television exert the most powerful influence on shaping a child's personality.

Feeling, thoughts and home atmosphere surrounding a child during its development. Unfortunately we do not know much effect this has on a child, but it has been observed that when parents are hostile to one another, even when they try to hide it, the children will sense it and will be affected by it. Research of young offenders shows that boys who were in conflict with the law, came frequently from "broken homes" without affectionate mothers, or from families where there was a conflict between parents. In contrast, the prevalence of offending was low for those raised in united homes without conflict and in "broken homes" with affectionate mothers. Apparently, it is not the "broken home", but the parental attitude which is the more important factor.⁷⁰

Internal abilities and the effect to understand things around them. Children in general have some inborn curiosity of the world around them, a need to learn and to discover. If this feature is nurtured, it will shape their life and their development. Unfortunately, very often parents believe that they should gratify a child's curiosity, instead of allowing a child to explore and find the answers for themselves. Such parent's attitude kills in a child a drive to explore the world, independent work and teaches it to accept ready answers and opinions of others. Curiosity is so valuable a phenomenon in life that its gratification should be delayed. Teachers and parents should stimulate the development of real curiosity, that is, to know about life.

Length of man's life

Gurdjieff maintained that the length of man's life is pre-determined and he compared it to clockwork. As the working of a clock depends on the length of its spring and winding, so the length of man's life depends on the condition of its internal spring - his internal energy. This is a special type of energy existing in the human brain. A person lives until his internal energy is used up. The quantity of the original energy and the degree of its usage depends on the above seven conditions. Therefore, the length of the man's life does not depend on his endeavours to prolong it, nor on using special health protective measures, but only on the accumulated energy. When this energy is depleted he must die.

The mechanism of energy utilisation is more complex because each of man's centres has an independent spring. But these springs do not unwind with the same speed. Depending on the inborn characteristics, external conditions and the man's style of living, when the energy of one spring is used up - only then will the centre corresponding to it stop working. Gurdjieff said that men are dying 'by thirds', meaning that they 'die in parts'.⁷¹ For example, if as a result of an intensive sporting life^a the moving centre is dying, and

^a Effect of sport on the length of man's life is discussed in chapter 5.

although the body is paralysed, its thinking and feeling is fully functioning. If the emotional centre dies - then the living body is wanting any feelings. This happens more often in type two men, who live mainly by emotion and feelings.

The life of each centre could be prolonged by reducing the speed of its energy consumption. For this purpose one would need a special regulator like in a clock. Such regulators do not allow the spring to unwind too quickly and in this way they control the clock's speed and time. However learning about this type of regulator and its proper usage is beyond the capabilities of an average man.

Chapter 3

The Terror of the situation

How does man's psychological characteristics and nature affect his private and social life? When we look at the overall situation of man, we can see that he functions very well as a biological organism. He has achieved a dominant position on Earth, because he has acquired a high level of scientific and technical knowledge. It is assumed that the level of man's development must be high because he has found solutions or even eliminated many problems that have plagued humankind from the beginning of its existence e.g. many common diseases and famines^a. The spectacular development of sciences such as the discovery of nuclear energy, world wide communication or the conquest of space have created vast new possibilities for man. It appears that man is in charge of himself and has full control of his environment. People believe in continuous progress and this progress seems visible. In principle they accept their lives, in its entirety of and although there may be often unhappiness and doubt about certain areas, nevertheless few people see any need for radical change.

Gurdjieff maintained that the real situation of man is much worse than commonly perceived. He believed that the kernel of the problem does not lie in the material sphere, but in man's psychological development. He postulated a very controversial hypothesis, stating that man, at the time of his birth, does not have a soul, as accepted by almost all religions, but has to create it himself by working consciously on his development^b. The soul is acquired only when the man reaches the required level of consciousness and Objective Reason. Awareness of the need to create a soul is the first and necessary step towards achieving immortality. If the man is not working on his development, he has no chance for immortality. Gurdjieff summarised man's situation using a terse statement- "If you live like a dog, you will die like a dog". This means that man who is not working on the development of his consciousness is only fulfilling the purpose set by Nature^c, viz. biological continuation of life on Earth. After his death, nothing is left. This state of affairs contributes to the man's 'terror of the situation'.

But 'the terror of the situation' does not only include the loss of immortality. Gurdjieff said that man's life is an endless chronicle of suffering and the worse suffering is caused by people themselves, e.g. by killings and physical cruelty towards his fellow creatures during wars and revolutions. Other forms of suffering, often equally bad, result from personal relations. Examples of this include physical violence, psychological

^a Famines that happen today often result not from the shortage of food in the world, but from the incompetence of organisations responsible for their storage, transport and distribution, and from the indifference of public to the situation of people in the Third World.

^b The subject of the soul creation is discussed in chapters 7 & 9.

^c See Chapter 8 - Cosmology.

cruelty, family breakdown, alcohol and drug abuse. Much of our suffering originates inside us as a result of our psychological conditions such as negative emotions and internal considering. People suffer, but their suffering does not make any sense, it is utterly useless. As a matter of fact most of these instances of suffering could be avoided, but people do not know how. This is the second element contributing to "the terror of the situation".

Gurdjieff did not have any doubts that this state of affairs results from the consequences of the working of the organ kundabuffer. As was discussed in chapter 2, in this context kundabuffer is a symbol of the totality of nature, psyche, character and other characteristics of man. This organ is responsible for the fact that man is asleep and lives like in a hypnotic trance. He is not able 'to do', and his life is beyond his control. Gurdjieff proclaimed: 'men are not men - but machines'. This is the third element contributing to "the terror of the situation".

Is there any way out of this situation? It looks like man has not managed so far, to find a viable solution. We know this because the number of wars is growing and the amount of suffering is not decreasing. Gurdjieff knew the answer and presented it in the form of a legend about Ashiata Shiemash. This legend shows two sides of human nature: what we truly are and what we should be, or could be. Ashiata Shiemash serves as a symbol of what is best and sacred in human beings and he could serve as a role model.

Legend of Ashiata Shiemash

Ashiata Shiemash was sent on the planet Earth by our Creator to help people to remove the consequences of the properties of the organ kundabuffer. Gurdjieff narrates that Ashiata Shiemash was born into a poor family descended from the Sumerian race, in a small village situated not far from Babylon, which was not yet a magnificent town at that time. When he became a responsible person, he started working towards achieving the purpose of his life. To find the right way to fulfil his duty he meditated for 120 days without food or drink on Mount Veziniama, and he drew up in his mind a definite plan for his further activities.

After the meditation he did not return to Babylon, but went straight to the city of Djoolfapal in the middle of the continent of Asia. In this city he founded a brotherhood called Heeshtvori - which means "only he will be called and become the son of God who acquires in himself conscience". He invited the brethren from other brotherhoods, who had already been working on their development, to join his brotherhood. Gurdjieff wants to tell us, that the type of people who would spread his teachings could only be found in "monasteries"; this means that they are people with an unusual mentality, separated from the harmful influences of society, who have an inborn need to know themselves and to seek the truth about the Universe.

With the help of initiated brethren, Ashiata Shiemash started spreading his teachings, first between the other monks of many monasteries, and later amongst the ordinary inhabitants of the city of Djoolfapal. After one year of training, a certain number of brethren became worthy of the title "all-rights-possessing brethren". To acquire such a title, a member of the brotherhood had to show besides attaining a certain level of

consciousness and understanding that he was able to convince a hundred other beings about the true teaching of Ashiata Shiemash and help them to achieve such a state of consciousness that they in turn would likewise convince at least a hundred others. Those who accomplished such a demanding duty were given the name of priest.

Ashiata Shiemash sent these priests to other cities and countries to organise similar brotherhoods to spread his teachings. After three years of hard work, not only all the inhabitants of Djoolfapal and its environs, but also many inhabitants of other countries, understood and started to apply, the impulses of genuine conscience to their daily life, and many joined the brotherhood and became priests. As a result of the work of priests after ten years, the majority of people on the continent of Asia become aware of the teaching and were working on the development of conscience. Many of them had already been applying this knowledge to every day life⁷².

Considerations about Faith, Hope and Love

During his meditations on Mountain Veziniama, Ashiata Shiemash first considered the possibility of using the sacred impulses of Faith, Hope and Love to fulfil his task. These impulses were appropriated by our Creator for the development and perfection of human kind. However he came to the conclusion that these sacred impulses had become mixed with some properties of the organ kundabuffer, and as a result of this process, distorted impulses of faith, hope and love had become crystallised in man's psyche and had very little in common with the genuine sacred impulses.

Gurdjieff said that it is very easy to persuade people to believe in anything if, during this process, the properties of the organ kundabuffer such as vanity, pride, presumptuousness etc. would take effect. These properties act upon man's degenerated reason resulting in false beliefs and convictions. Thus man's faith, based on subjective and unconfirmed data received from unreliable sources, linked with his gullibility and credulity, could result in people tending to believe in any nonsense, especially when so called "authorities" are involved.

As regards 'love' there is a similar situation. Ordinary people are unable to describe genuine Love, because, for a long time, none of them have any sensation of this sacred impulse. What contemporary people call love is a result of the properties of the organ kundabuffer; therefore each person would describe love in a different way. Nowadays someone loves somebody because they are sexually attracted to the other person, are encouraged and flattered, are impressed by their personality, wealth, social position or fame. Seldom does man love with genuine impartial and non-egoistic love. People "love" many things, but mainly they love themselves and everything that brings them satisfaction and pleasure.

Gurdjieff does not explain how the impulse of genuine Love manifests, but St. Paul probably writes about such Love in his first letter to the Corinthians: "What if I could prophesy and understand all secrets and all knowledge? And what if I had faith that moved mountains? I would be nothing, unless I loved others".⁷³

Gurdjieff stated that the plight of the impulse of Hope is even worse than the other two impulses. Not only has this impulse changed into maleficent 'hope', but it has become the principal reason why the genuine impulses of Faith, Love and Hope cannot arise any more. The new 'hope' manifests itself in expecting something to happen without our effort, our will and our work. What people call 'hope' has nothing in common with the sacred impulse of Hope, but with the disease called 'tomorrow' or 'mañana'. This disease induces people to postpone until later everything they should do now, because they are convinced that 'later' they will fare better and more. Gurdjieff maintained that this affliction caused a lot of damage, especially to those people who through their Reason have the chance to become aware, of their many defects and of the possible remedial action. Although they understand the need for development, they achieve nothing because they postpone any action 'till tomorrow', when, possibly it is too late to change anything. This disease not only hinder man's development, but it also may affect his daily routine.

One could say that as a result of the consequences of the organ kundabuffer Love has been changed into egoism, Hope into delaying and Faith into credulity. Gurdjieff does not write more about the sacred impulses of Faith, Love and Hope, but he quotes the following inscription on the 'marble tablets' kept in the secret brotherhood called the "Olbogmek", located somewhere on the continent of Asia (the name Olbogmek means "There are no different religions, there is only one God").

FAITH, LOVE AND HOPE

Faith of consciousness is freedom

Faith of feelings is weakness

Faith of body is stupidity

Love of consciousness evokes the same in response

Love of feelings evokes the opposite

Love of body depends only on type and polarity

Hope of consciousness is strength

Hope of feeling is slavery

Hope of body is disease⁷⁴

The author leaves the interpretation of these statements to the Reader, because each person will find in them different values depending on the level of his understanding.

Teachings of Ashiata Shiemash

As a result of his meditation, Ashiata Shiemash came to the conclusion that the original sacred impulses of Faith, Hope and Love were corrupted due to the continuous influences of the organ kundabuffer, therefore it

would be very difficult to use them for the further development of man. However, he observed that man still possesses a substantial amount of the authentic Objective Conscience, data that has survived in his subconscious. This data does not take part in the normal functioning of man, because we do not know how to communicate with it. Ashiata Shiemash decided that he would work towards bringing out these data into the conscious part, so it could be used for man's normal functioning.⁷⁵

Ashiata Shiemash explained to his initiate brothers that the impulse of Objective Conscience arises in people as a result of the direct influence of our All-Loving and Long-Suffering, Endless Creator. That is why the source of genuine Conscience in people is sometimes called the 'Representative of the Creator'.⁷⁶

Gurdjieff stated that the impulse of Objective Conscience manifests itself in some people in the form of 'remorse of conscience' when subjected to strong moral shocks. As a result of these shocks the remains of Objective Conscience existing in man's subconscious are released and start functioning in their everyday life. Unfortunately people have learnt how to suppress 'remorse of conscience' by inventing new philosophies and beliefs or by abandoning themselves to the power of alcohol and drugs.

Ashiata Shiemash taught that the way to salvation is the way of conscious work and intentional suffering. Conscious labour includes work performed for the benefits of other people, and intentional suffering includes a kind of suffering that we voluntarily accept in order to further our development. The impulse of Objective Conscience arises in us as a result of a continuous struggle between the processes connected with the functioning of our bodies and the processes connected with the arising and development of our soul. To develop Objective Conscience we have to struggle with, what is called, 'desires' of the body. Ashiata Shiemash taught that someone who consciously assists the 'nondesires' to prevail over the 'desires', behaves in accordance with the Being of our Common Father Creator Himself; whereas he who consciously assists the opposite only increases His sorrow.⁷⁷

It is necessary to emphasise that intentional suffering, as described by Gurdjieff, is not mortification of the body, inflicting physical pain as was common during the period of early Christianity, but has a mental dimension of suffering, linked with physical effort. Intentional suffering might include enduring somebody's wrong behaviour, helping others when it causes us substantial hardship, sacrificing our time, and effort and any 'good deeds' we do for others without any expectation of gratitude or even a feeling of self-satisfaction^a. 'Desires' of the body do not have any association with normal sex that is treated by Gurdjieff as one of man's most important and essential functions. These 'desires' originate from our pride, vanity, conceit, greed, etc. and manifest themselves by the accumulation of wealth, acquisition of power and fame, embellishment of the body, adornment, boasting, and concentrating on physical gratification like excessive eating, drinking or debauchery.

^a Intentional suffering is discussed in Chapter 7.

Gurdjieff maintained that Objective Conscience could grow as a result of conscious self-denial of things desired by our bodies and psyche, although not necessary for the normal functioning of man. From this suffering would come one of the most important elements leading to the formation of our soul.

Results of the teachings of Ashiata Shiemash

Gurdjieff described that the results of Ashiata Shiemash's work were astounding. When most of the people on the continent of Asia started to work towards self-development, or were aware of the possibility of perfecting themselves, these results became visible in all aspects of life, including social and political conditions. Within ten years two of the most pernicious social forms disappeared that had been obstructing the development of normal conditions of human existence. First, any divisions into numerous communities with various forms of organisations and administration so called 'state organisations' disappeared. Secondly, various divisions into castes and classes that had existed in these communities since their origins, also vanished. The removal of castes and classes resulted, in turn, in the change of behaviour patterns of people. Without any specific groups people would identify with, and the customary divisions into 'they' and 'us', the fear of members of the ruling classes likewise ceased to exist. Without suspicions between various groups of castes and classes mutual killings began to disappear. The need for mutual destruction, so deeply rooted in man's psyche in this part of the world, completely evaporated.

People changed their attitude and behaviour towards each other. Their relationships became based on the esteem that resulted from their merits and personal values acquired by conscious labour and intentional suffering. Changes of man's consciousness resulted in slaves being freed. Members of the ruling classes gave up their undeserved privileges and rights when their consciousness told them that they had held their offices not for the common good, but for personal gain and for the fulfilment of their vanity and self-love.

Many people, who consciously worked on self-development following Ashiata Shiemash's guidelines attained results visible to everybody. They were held in high esteem and their values were recognised by others. They were asked for advice and usually they achieved the highest positions in society. Chiefs and leaders attained their positions due to greater maturity and possessing what is called 'essence power', instead of hereditary rights or by election, as is the case today. People became leaders when they acquired objective personal merits that could be sensed by others around them as genuine. The most venerable leader would become a chief of the community, and his directives and advice were treated as sacred law for everybody.

Gurdjieff's writing about the disappearance of the old governing structures does not support anarchy and lawlessness. He wanted to show the pernicious effects of a society that was divided into groups with have common interests and thus trying to dominate other groups. He believed that the removal of the divisions between people would eliminate the sources of conflicts and the causes of many wars and revolutions. It would be necessary to have other forms of social organisation and governing bodies, but the new leaders, having a high level of consciousness, would not initiate and support wars for personal gain.

The other unexpected blessing resulting from achieving a high level of consciousness was a substantial reduction in the death rate. This resulted from the changes of man's psyche, from better understanding of oneself and others. The changes increased tolerance and acceptance of the behaviour of other people, reduced personal and social stresses and conflicts. Not only were the number of conflicts substantially reduced, but completely new methods of solving arguments were introduced.

Significance of Ashiata Shiemash's teachings

By way of the Ashiata Shiemash legend, Gurdjieff tries to show that there is a possibility of improving man's situation. However, he maintained that only the change of consciousness of individuals could result in radical changes of society as a whole. Permanent changes cannot be introduced by revolutions, use of force or any kind of coercion. The introduction of changes is a much slower and more difficult process than was recognised by many reformers and revolutionaries. This is a somewhat pessimistic conclusion, that the actions undertaken by a small group of people, who understand the necessity to improve a given situation, but do not possess developed consciousness, would not bring lasting results. This can be seen from the outcome of many revolutions such as the French or Russian, where original good intentions to improve people's existence ended in a complete fiasco and rule by terror. Thus even the most 'enlightened' group of people have very limited influence on the development of consciousness and understanding^a of other people.

Gurdjieff presents the picture of a new society, where people have attained Objective Reason. This picture shows an ideal, or utopian society, because this goal is unachievable for people with the present level of consciousness. What was this ideal society? It was a society without a ruling class, and without any divisions into classes, castes or ethnic groups. It had a new system of governing; it was a kind of 'United States of the Planet'. Many collective negative emotions such as chauvinistic patriotism, class and religious hatred and racism that were the main causes of many wars and revolutions, were completely eradicated. Greed, egoism, envy, the lust for power and domination of others had disappeared. People concentrated on attaining internal, not external wealth.

The most important development in the new society was to bring people with a high level of consciousness and essence to power. These people were recognised by others as being worthy of holding the highest offices. Such leaders had helped other people to attain Objective Reason, they put public welfare before their own interest, and made impartial decisions. This type of leadership removes a constant struggle for power and secures stable and peaceful existence of the society.

Development of the collective conscience

If we could analyse basic elements of the described ideal society we would arrive at the conclusion that in view of man's present condition, there is no chance that it could be brought about and it would be practically

^a See section on 'knowledge, understanding and being' in Chapter 1.

impossible, for a very long time, to introduce all the necessary changes into a society. One might doubt if would it ever be possible. Should we draw the conclusion that we should do nothing? When we compare the economic and social development of various countries, we notice big differences between them. One could explain that these differences have arisen as a result of the historical situation, slave labour, greater technology or even better neighbours. However, countries providing their citizens with a high level of social security, health service, care of the elderly etc. have something in common. Their inhabitants demonstrate a high level of collective conscience. Collective conscience manifests itself by the feeling of responsibility for the existence and the wellbeing of other people. People on the lowest level of collective conscience take care of themselves and their closest family; on the highest level they are concerned with the future and wellbeing of all people on Earth.

One of the consequences of society's low level of collective conscience is the existence of corruption. Corrupted people want to obtain benefits, not as a result of their abilities, knowledge, qualifications or just distribution, but by using bribery. Corruption tends to impoverish society as a whole because it favours the most greedy and ruthless not the best and most worthy. Corrupted people, while in power, will always make decisions benefiting themselves and their families and the whole of society pays the price. Much worse are the long term effects of corruption. It weakens the moral fabric of society, discourages hard work, destroys honesty, and causes the economical and social decline of the corrupted country. It is known that corruption manifests itself in many forms. Bribery is the most crude and visible form, but there are other more subtle forms of corruption, e.g. preferential treatment of ex- members of the same school or university known as an "old boys network"; however the promotion of interest of people belonging to the same class, party, secret society, club, etc. could be equally damaging, and, what worse cannot be eradicated because it is less visible to the public, and practically impossible to prove, because the corrupted people are bonded for life in mutually supportive social structures. It is interesting that in public, nobody calls this type of behaviour corruption!

The teachings of Ashiata Shiemash give a very clear message. The increase of collective conscience is only possible through the development of higher individual consciousness. If we consider the present political situation in Europe, we are aware that some European leaders, with a higher level of collective conscience established after the Second World War the European Community to prevent future wars. However, the individual level of consciousness is, even in Europe, very low, and the collective conscience on the level of clan or family, on a tribal or regional, or at best on a national level is prevailing in many countries. In this situation each group tries to gain the most benefit for themselves at the cost of others, without consideration for common European interests. Fortunately this is done in a peaceful way.

What conclusions could be drawn from Ashiata Shiemash's teachings? If we really want to improve our, and the next generations', situations we should concentrate on the development of consciousness of the individual members of the society we live in. Even a small increase of the average level of consciousness

could lead to significant changes in the methods of selection of the governing elite, to the reduction of corruption, to better social justice, to a better life for everybody. We should regard the development of individual consciousness as a process of continuous improvement of society. It is an extremely important process, even though the changes would be very slow.

Historic connections

The Ashiata Shiemash legend could be linked with certain historic facts. Ashiata Shiemash was born in Sumer, later known as Babylon. From the archaeological findings it is known that before the Babylonian civilisation, probably even before 3500 BC, there existed in this area the Sumerian civilisation, which reached a very high level of development. Around 1750 BC, this civilisation was conquered and assimilated by the Semitic tribes, who established the Babylonian civilisation. The Sumerian civilisation was probably much higher developed than the following civilisation, although we have much less information about it. According to some historians, early Sumerian society was ruled by a temple theocracy, viz. by priests, and therefore was considered 'primitive'. Gurdjieff ironically comments on these historian's conclusions: "But what this 'priest state' was, and why it existed...is it not all the same to contemporary beings of the planet Earth what 'ancient savages' did!"⁷⁸

Analysis of the archaeological findings and many deciphered documents presented by Professor Samuel Kramer⁷⁹ show completely the opposite. He describes the Sumer state, or rather several independent city-states, as a very sophisticated and developed society with an advanced education and legal systems^a, where women had certain important legal rights such as holding property, engaging in business and qualifying as a witness. This society provided social security and the word 'freedom' is mentioned in some documents as early as 2350 BC. During the early stages of its development it did not have a permanent army, which means that it was not interested in conquering other countries and did not use force against its neighbours. In those times the political power lay in the hands of priests, free citizens and an elected city governor. Citizens were organised in a house of 'elders' and a house of 'men'. These states existed for more than a thousand years in for these times exceptional stability. Thus not only the system of governing was stable, but society itself was stable and reasonably happy. This would indicate that the early leaders possessed a higher level of consciousness and understanding of the citizens needs.

Destruction of Ashiata Shiemash's teachings

The main purpose of Gurdjieff's work was to present a thorough criticism of society and the mentality of man. To achieve the required results he is using metaphorical forms rather than a detailed analysis of the problems and shortcomings of different societies. Using this method he has achieved that his criticism is applicable to societies in different parts of the World and in varied periods of human history: to those that

^a Hammurabi codex was based on the Sumerian law.

already existed, to those that function at the present time and to those still to come in the future. Gurdjieff does not focus on individual facts and situations, but on the processes determining and shaping the behaviour and conduct of man. Due to this type of approach his analyses are timeless and will be applicable to every epoch, because the psychological processes of man have not changed since Babylonian times in spite of fundamental changes in man's external living conditions and the emergence of new existential problems.

In the second part of the legend, Gurdjieff explains why and how the results of Ashiata Shiemash's labours disappeared from the surface of the Earth. He uses this part of the legend to conduct a critical analysis of contemporary society. The legend says that the actions of a certain type of people were responsible for the destruction of Ashiata Shiemash's teachings.

Lentrohamsanin

According to this legend thinkers in Babylon, described by Gurdjieff as " 'learned beings of a new formation', were responsible for the destruction of the results of Ashiata Shiemash's teachings. Like 'contagious bacilli', they become unconscious disseminators of every kind of evil that already existed among their own and subsequent generations."⁸⁰ The most destructive influence was exerted by a 'scientist called Lentrohamsanin. He represents the archetype of a utopian rationalist, modern revolutionary and intellectual (his name is made up of the first syllables of the names of Lenin and Trotsky) and he symbolises the quintessence of what is most harmful in present day Western civilisation.

The legend says that Lentrohamsanin had very rich parents, who thought that he was a genius and arranged for him best teachers from as far a field as Egypt. These teachers hammered into his head vast quantities of useless and unproven knowledge. As a result Lentrohamsanin became a product of the great vanity of his parents as well as his teachers. Before he reached maturity, he was full of fantastic knowledge of a doubtful value. He acquired the most advanced knowledge at that time, but he never developed his essence. However, he had fully developed the consequences of the organ kundabuffer such as vanity, egoism, conceit, boastfulness. His behaviour was governed not by the love of truth, but by his ambition. His ambition was to become the most famous scientist in the world. He decided that to achieve this he had to discover a completely new theory. But before he started his work on it, he decided that it would be written on parchment made from buffalo skin - not one - but at least a hundred joined skins, which was unheard of in those times and immediately attracted everybody's attention.

At the beginning of his manuscript Lentrohamsanin stated: "Man's greatest happiness consists in not being dependent on any other person, whoever it may be, and in being free from the influence of anyone whatsoever!"⁸¹ He postulated that, to be fully happy, people should be free from work and the need to earn their daily bread; that true freedom is the freedom from hard labour and other duties. To attain this type of freedom everything old should be destroyed, to make room for a new social system. He proclaimed that

people should be ruled by those who they had elected , who also toil for their daily bread as everyone else. These new leaders should be elected on the basis of equal rights, without distinction of sex or age; by universal, direct, equal and open ballot⁸².

After finishing his manuscript Lentrohamsanin invited all men in the country to a very sumptuous banquet. At the end of the banquet he showed the guests his work. Gurdjieff describes ironically the behaviour of the invited learned men when faced with such a 'great' new theory. At the same time he paints an unflattering picture of a group of people, who exert great influence on the moulding of public opinion in modern societies, namely - scientists.

" (They) ... were at first so flabbergasted at the sight of that unique kashireitleer^a that they were, as is said 'struck dumb', and it was only after some time that they began to look at each other with amazement and to exchange opinions in whispers...Above all they asked one another how it was possible that not a single being, ordinary or learned, had known or guessed that in their own country there existed a learned being with such knowledge...Thereupon began that pernicious reciprocal 'praising to the skies' which has always been practised among the 'learned beings' of new formation... (They) began hailing him as their 'long-awaited Messiah'⁸³. The reason why these learned beings started to praise Lentrohamsanin's work lies in their deeply rooted conviction that anyone who becomes a follower of a famous and important person will appear to others to be almost as well known and important himself.

After the banquet everybody was talking about those 'revelations', and as usually happens, they became divided into two opposing camps, which we can also witness in present times. One party supported the new ideas, and the others favoured the status quo as established by Ashiata Shiemash. This situation continued for almost a year, and during this time the number of followers of each party was increasing, while hatred towards each other was intensifying. The hatred reached the zenith and one day fights broke out between the followers of each party which led to civil war.

How could such a popular uprising be explained? Lentrohamsanin persuaded simple and good people, who knew that they did not have a chance to attain Objective Reason, because they understood that the effort needed to achieve it was beyond their abilities. Therefore, instead of a great vision set by Ashiata Shiemash, Lentrohamsanin offered them something much easier to attain. He told them to seek personal happiness based on laziness and pleasure. He appealed to two human characteristics: the want to obtain something for nothing, and the desire to be free and happy. It is not surprising that his ideas found so much support amongst the common people who joined his revolution.

After four days of fighting, the revolution spread to the whole country and lasted until the followers of Lentrohamsanin forced the remaining surviving opponents to accept the new theories. After the victory a new government was established and the country was called a republic. Soon after this the existing beliefs

^a Parchment

and old traditions and culture were consequently destroyed. After achieving full control of the country, the new government, , started wars with its neighbours to establish the hegemony of new doctrines in other countries. Thus, on the wave of mass psychosis and civil war, Ashiata Shiemash's teachings disappeared not only in one country, but on the whole continent of Asia.

The old and new philosophy of life

The main difference between the philosophies of Ashiata Shiemash and Lentrohamsanin could be summarised by these statements. The former said: "There is a method by which we can arrive now at an understanding of 'What is' ". The latter said: "There is a means by which we can accommodate ourselves to 'What is', without understanding it"⁸⁴. Adjusting ourselves to this 'What is' in the Lentrohamsanin language means 'fighting for personal freedom and happiness'. This way of reasoning had been taken up by the ancient Greeks and Romans, and it became a foundation of the Euro-American civilisation.

Orage explained the results of this reasoning: "All popular explanations of life are now based on the personal; the objective has been swallowed up in egoism. We cannot formulate any philosophy except from the point of view of personal interest. ... Without higher emotional understanding ordinary man has the idea that the Universe just happened, and that therefore life on our planet, including the human, is to be exploited; or, that God had no useful purpose in creating the world and that he has no use for us; or, that he created it just for us, that he loves human beings and only wants them to be happy - and if they will not be good and happy and do as he wants he will be angry and punish them. This is one of our more childish attitudes, that our chief purpose is to be happy and that the path to happiness is to make others happy....Still another variation is that of the pathological Communist-Socialist: what matters my happiness now and those around me so long as there is 'progress' and happiness for others in the future?"⁸⁵

When we look at our philosophy of life we could say that in each of us exists Lentrohamsanin who is trying to destroy the works of Ashiata Shiemash. Lentrohamsanin represents unconscious forces that are trying to overcome the conscious, striving for development and perfection. He is the embodiment in us of the dislike to bear any suffering^a that is necessary to attain higher consciousness and Objective Reason. In every normal human reasoning there are sufficiently convincing arguments to reject the teachings of Buddha, Jesus Christ or Ashiata Shiemash⁸⁶.

New interpretation of freedom

Gurdjieff uses the legend to carry out a criticism of one of the most important ideas that has been shaping the development of mankind over the last a few thousand years, and reached it's apogee of popularity in the last century: the idea of freedom. This idea was developed in ancient Greece and republican Rome where it

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Although Gurdjieff uses the word 'suffering', the word 'renunciation' better transmits his intentions

was applicable to the privileged part of society only. After more than a thousand years of absence it re-emerged, taking part in establishing new democratic systems in the free Italian state-cities, in the 14 century and following this, in many other cities in Europe. From the times of the French revolution and the American War of Independence, the idea of freedom reached its prominent position and has exerted a great influence on the development of Western civilisation ever since. In the last 50 years it has been evolving towards the domination of individual freedom at the cost of social values.

This legend presents a symbolic picture of contemporary society, in which one part of the population forced the other part to accept the new idea of 'freedom'. This might be applicable to every revolution - the French, Russian or Chinese, that moulded contemporary political and social dogmas. These dogmas, introduced by force, were invented by individuals, who like Lentrehamsanin did not understand the real needs of man and the true causes of the existing evil. Each revolution destroys old knowledge and traditions that are called reactionary and outdated and transfers power into the hands of people who are on the lowest level of consciousness and essence. Each revolution uses many slogans, but the most worn out is the word 'freedom'.

In the name of freedom most cruel wars have been carried out and, as a result, millions of people have been killed. All terrorist groups call themselves 'freedom fighters', and armies conquering other nations are 'liberating' people. The peak of paradox is a slogan used by the revolutionists - 'no freedom for the enemies of freedom'. A good example of this type of 'liberation' can be observed in Africa, where the brutal regimes that have ever existed anywhere on Earth are found in those countries free from colonial rule.

The idea of freedom that is dominating Western culture is very vague and general. According to the most common convictions in the West, personal and political freedom are the most important. However, for the majority of people in the World, freedom from starvation, from persecution, injustice and freedom from wars are more important than personal freedom. If we could see what a narrow and deceptive concept the Western idea of freedom is, we would find that fighting for it, sacrificing the lives of many people, seems very irrational.

Lentrehamsanin fought for freedom which he believed, could not be provided by the Ashiata Shiemash system that was based on the submission to the authority of the elders, who had attained leadership through their essence and Objective Reason. He represents a purely egoistic and personal concept of freedom, rejecting the necessity to fulfil obligations connected with social responsibility and the higher destiny of mankind. In his narrow vision of reality he believed that man's effort to fulfil his duty was slavery. Gurdjieff wants to show us that people like Lentrehamsanin had lost the higher purpose of man's existence. This purpose, exists in various forms in many religions and helps to direct man to salvation. In Western civilisation people however do not work towards securing this aim. Salvation has somehow become a passive goal, and has been replaced by the pragmatic objectives such as acquiring money, power and pleasures. One could say that our civilisation is based on Lentrehamsanin's ideas.

Gurdjieff observed that the present existence of man is based on intellect, not on 'understanding of heart'. 'Understanding of heart' is a result of the functioning of Objective Conscience, while what has originated from intellect, erroneously called consciousness, is in reality only the result of the working of our imagination, pure illusion. In reality, contemporary Western civilisation is based on a camouflaged force, on violence, slavery and common platitudes. What we believe in does not find support in the real world, resulting in so many contradictions, struggles and so much suffering.

Hasnamuss

Gurdjieff introduces a new name for a person who exerts an extremely harmful influence on society and he calls him a hasnamuss. This type of person includes the first hasnamuss - Lentrohamsanin, and possesses the following characteristics⁸⁷:

1. Every kind of depravity, conscious as well as unconscious;
2. The feeling of self-satisfaction from leading others astray;
3. The irresistible urge to destroy the existence of other breathing creatures;
4. The inclination to free oneself from the necessity of making the being-effort required by Nature;
5. The tendency to make use of every kind of artifice to conceal what, in the opinion of others, are one's physical defects;
6. Serene enjoyment in the use of what is not personally deserved;
7. The striving to be what one is not.

Typical contemporary hasnamusses are well educated, sometimes intellectuals with outstanding abilities to influence other people. Their common 'distinction' is that their level of consciousness and essence is very low. They are always sure of themselves, their greatness and abilities, they crave for fame and power. They are utterly ruthless in their relations with others and lack a feeling of responsibility for the consequences of their actions and for the lives of other people. These features help them to attain high and influential positions in government, business or sciences.

Hasnamusses occupying senior positions in governments and ruling bodies cause the most harm, because they have direct influence on the lives of a large part of society. For example, they could, without proper understanding of the economic mechanism, introduce financial policies that superficially look like an improvement, but in the long term could cause malfunctioning of the system^a. In democratically ruled countries such hasnamusses, after causing grave damage, are usually removed from power after a few years. In totalitarian countries they tend to function until their death, causing sometimes irreversible, great economic destruction, e.g. Stalin or Mao Tse Tung.

^a Privatisation of railways in the UK could be a good illustration of such an activity.

Very harmful are activities of hasnamusses in business, especially when they are in charge of very large companies. Some corporations have larger budgets than many countries and employ often well above a hundred thousand people. Their chief executives have almost dictatorial powers and if the company makes a good profit, it is very difficult to remove them. The main problem is that these people are practically outside the control of society and they are focused only on one thing - how to obtain the highest profits. Because of this narrow-minded approach they are responsible for the destruction of environment, for pollution, exploitation of the work force and even the life and death of people in the Third World. Hasnamusses do not always increase the profits of their companies, and like in government, they are quite capable of destroying a good business^a.

Less direct damage is incurred by the activities of hasnamusses in science and philosophy, although they can influence the way of thinking and the lives of millions of people. For example, they might propose certain theories that are then treated by the public as proven, and in the end might be treated in the way of religious dogmas. One of the most influential theories, that has been shaping our understanding of life and the way thinking in the last hundred years, is Darwin's theory of evolution^b. It affects not only our scientific understanding, but has had a very detrimental effect on the development of the spiritual life and higher consciousness of man. According to neo-Darwinism, man is nothing but a complicated biological machine without any spiritual needs. Darwin's theory is based on selectively chosen observations, though there are many observations that do not support it^{88,89,90}; however they are ignored by the academic establishment^c. In parallel there are many researchers who are challenging the validity of the principles of neo-Darwinism. To

^a The total ruin of well known companies such as GEC/Marconi in the UK and Enron in the USA are good illustrations of the activities of this type of people..

^b Gurdjieff did not support the biblical presentation of the creation, but maintained that the arising of man on the Earth was as a result of the process of evolution. But this evolution was determined by the laws of the Universe (see Chapter on Cosmology), not by the process presented by Darwin.

^c To these types of observations belong for example fossil discoveries showing the rapid rise of species without visible intermediate forms. The recovered fossils do not support the famous 'tree of evolution' as shown by Darwinists. New discoveries in genetics and biochemistry provide more data that is at variance with the theory. One of the most important critics of neo-Darwinism is M.J. Behe, a professor of biochemistry at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania. According to him, the functioning of even simple biological organisms at the molecular level is so complicated, that it is impossible that their complex structure could arise by random changes.

To find a more plausible solution encompassing the new discoveries, more unorthodox theories have been proposed, such as those of S.J. Gould and N. Eldridge who postulated that new species could arise very quickly in special conditions such as completely isolated places (Punctuated Equilibria: An Alternative to Phyletic Gradualism, in 'Models in Paleobiology', ed. M. Schopf, Freeman, Cooper & Co., 1973, p. 82-115)

these academics belongs Lynn Margulis, an outstanding professor of biology at Massachusetts University who says that history will judge the followers of neo-Darwinism as an "insignificant religious sect in the 20th century"⁹¹.

The present world is full of hasnamussian scientists predicting time travelling, the development of computers that will be more intelligent than people, as well as dramatic ecological, economic and cosmic catastrophes, and discovering sources of energy and treatments for incurable illnesses. To achieve, one day, world wide fame they publish their 'discoveries' in newspapers and on the television, avoiding professional publications that would ask for more rigorous scientific proofs.

Less harmful hasnamussian activities include spiritualism, UFO's, extra sensory perception –(ESP), astrology, witchcraft, black magic, and fortune telling.

Democratic elections

It might come as a big surprise that Gurdjieff does not support the idea of democratic elections that are recognised as the most important achievement of contemporary civilisation. Indeed, fundamental Western political and social structures are based on democratic elections, and so far there is no better alternative. However, before we consider Gurdjieff's solution, let us look at how the ideas of freedom and democracy work in practice. Democratic elections and the slogans like equality, freedom and brotherhood that have arisen as a result of the French revolution and the American War of Independence, are widely accepted because they reflect our imaginary picture of ourselves. They are a result of our high opinion of ourselves; the belief that we have free will and a sufficiently high ability to reason, a high level of understanding ourselves and the world around us. Therefore when we are 18 we have the right to vote and by this action we can decide about our fate and that of other people. Nowadays, in many countries, governments are elected democratically by direct and universal ballot. How does this democracy work in practice? The events of the last hundred years show that democratically elected governments have not managed to prevent wars or reduce the amount of suffering in those countries. To understand the lack of progress we have to realise what kind of people acquire power and how do they do it. During elections we vote mainly for candidates that have been selected by various parties. Whoever is not a member of a party or a famous personality, has no chance of being a candidate. So the system, even before the elections, eliminates many worthy people, who are not interested in playing party politics.

Therefore what type of person is elected? Normally, very ambitious and greedy for power, very often intelligent and highly educated, vain and full of egoism, merciless, frequently good actors, sometimes deeply committed to ideas or even psychopathic, but in general with a low level of consciousness and essence. Their main aim is to attain power and to keep it for as long as possible, and if an opportunity arises, to increase their wealth. And the voters count on such people, believing that they will care about public welfare, will take responsibility for the life, health and well being of those who have elected them. It is not

surprising that very soon election promises are broken and the voters are disappointed. In the next elections vote for the opposition, or do not bother to vote^a. However, irrespective of which party gains power, the problems remains unsolved.

Why does this happen? Where does the problem lie and what is the solution? People are convinced that they are rational, therefore they should be able to select the best candidates. Why do these candidates not fulfil the voter's expectations?

The problem is this, that people with a low level of consciousness and essence will, in general, vote for candidates similar to themselves. Since it is practically impossible for them to distinguish between essence and personality, voters tend to choose a person with low essence but with a very dominating personality. Therefore they will vote for charismatic people, persuasive speakers, with good acting abilities and often with large encyclopaedic knowledge.

Unfortunately the fact is that people with a highly developed level of consciousness and essence do not want to be candidates being aware that they will not be elected by such voters. This results from the fact that man number one, two or three (see chapter 1) can communicate well with a man of a similar type. He will easily understand a person similar to himself and will vote for him. People with a low level of essence will never elect a person having a higher level of essence because they will not trust him. Very rarely do people possessing a high level of essence have become elected as leaders, but they are chosen because of their military abilities, acting abilities and the way they were able to hide their true values. One could say that democratically elected government and politicians reflect the level of consciousness and essence of the majority of the electorate.

One of the most important negative features of a democratic system is that it is unable to guarantee freedom and the rights of minorities. Democratically elected governments represent the will of the majority, not the interests of the entire society. This is most visible in the African countries where the ballot reflects ethnic divisions. The most extreme example of such a situation was observed in Rwanda, where the democratically elected government of the Hutu majority did not interfere when a large part of the smaller Tutsi tribe, was exterminated. When we consider many well known examples of discrimination against ethnic minorities, we see that the democratic system is, by its nature, unable to guarantee the rights to all citizens, it is, in fact, a dictatorship of the majority.

In some countries people are disappointed by their democratically elected governments and have had enough of the gamesmanship of ambitious politicians who in reality care truly only about their own interests. These people dream of an ideal leader who will unite the country and lead them in the right direction. On these types of dreams extreme right wing parties tend to prey. Unfortunately these dreams can never be fulfilled because any system of popular elections does not guarantee that a suitable leader will be

^a In local elections in the UK, normally less than 30% of the eligible population tend to vote.

selected. This can be confirmed by the rise to power by popular vote by leaders such as Hitler, Salazar or Stalin (although not elected by all people, but supported by party members). We know that their mastery ended in total disaster. Therefore, in spite of the inadequacy of democratic systems, elected governments based on egoistic mediocrity are often a safer alternative than being ruled by a charismatic dictator.

The fact that democratic election gives very limited benefits has been recognised by the business community. For example, the selection of a chief executive of a company is done by its directors, not by the shareholders or the employees. In practice, only this system can guarantee that the best candidate will be chosen for the job. It might be worth emphasising that, where money is concerned, we use a system that secures the best return on our investment, and we do not care about democratic ideas. From the history of development of large well known companies we can learn that many of them achieved leading positions in the world owing to the exceptional abilities of their chief.

How does the democratic system work in one of the oldest modern democracies viz.: in the United States of America? In the USA, a theory was proposed by Walter Lipman in the 1920s which was based on Freud's discoveries, and assumed that the human masses are driven by irrational impulses and unconscious forces and are therefore too immature and unreliable to be responsible for policy decisions. He believed that the masses could not be trusted to control a democratic system, but had to be directed^a. This theory found the support of President Hoover, and Edward Bernays, a well known marketing guru^b who designed a system whereby the interests of an average man towards fulfilling his desires of consumption were directed away from political issues. This system, operates up to now with some modifications and secures political stability through skilful manipulation of the masses by the ruling elite. Since the election of J.F. Kennedy the electorate has been presented with the personalities of the candidates, but not with real issues, thus enabling some actors to be elected to top government positions.

Let us consider what benefits a system of democratic elections provides. Mainly, it gives the voters the illusion of freedom and the feeling that they can influence the way the country is governed. The action of casting a ballot gives us the feeling of power and being in charge of our lives. Actually there is no choice because candidates from different political parties, although with different political programmes, are in reality the same, and they will behave and rule in the same way, viz. to improve their own position, therefore the situation of the voters will not change.

It is without any doubt, democratic elections give people who are thirsty for power the possibility of gaining it without the use of force or bloodshed. In non-democratic political systems such people would have to start

^a This theory was soon to be confirmed by the events in Germany in 1933.

^b One of the most publicised achievements of Bernays in the 1920s was to persuade American women that cigarette smoking is a symbol of women's freedom and independence; not only a symbol of masculinity, and led to the spread of mass smoking of cigarettes by women all over the world.

a revolution or civil war to achieve their ambition. In democratic systems they have to persuade the voter that they will take care of the people, or they simply have to bribe them.

The alternative proposed by Gurdjieff is based on the election of leaders not by a universal ballot but on social consensus. Candidates are selected by the elders using the criteria of essence and Objective Reason. Only a leader with well developed consciousness will truly care about the welfare of other people and only such a leader could be trusted with lives of others. Consequently such a leader could only be identified and selected by others with a similar level of consciousness, because people on a lower level would not be able to notice this person's values. It is a system that is closer to the selection process of a chief executive of a company (in the absence of corruption) than to popular ballot. Such a system could not be introduced at present and it is not certain that it could be introduced at all. Progress in this direction could be achieved in small steps by educating the society and by increasing people's consciousness. This could lead to an improvement of the democratic election system, where the standard of candidates would be slowly increasing.

Chapter 4

The fruits of former civilisations

Gurdjieff pays a lot of attention to the influences that the ancient civilisations of Greece and Rome had on contemporary Western civilisation. Both the Greek and Roman civilisations are very important to us because European civilisation has inherited from them almost all the social and political structures, scientific development methodology, arts, philosophy and ethics, and we are, to a great extent, proud to be their successors. Our literature, drama, poetry, logic and even sports are a continuation of their achievements. However Gurdjieff maintained that this inheritance is very harmful and is the original cause of many of our problems and shortcomings. He particularly concentrated on two of the most pernicious consequences of this inheritance for humankind, which he called, ironically, 'the fruits of former civilisations', viz. the development of 'fantastic' theories and an obsession with sex.

Story about Greek fisherman and Roman shepherds⁹²

Gurdjieff presents the 'genesis' of 'the fruits of former civilisations' in the form of a satirical story about Greek fishermen and Roman shepherds, who arrived a long time ago, from somewhere on the continent of Asia, settled down and established communities that were later called Greece and Rome. To give the Reader a sample of Gurdjieff's style of writing, let us listen to Beelzebub telling this story to his grandson.

"And the history of their further maleficent 'prepared inheritance' for the beings of subsequent generations is as follows:

"According to the investigations of our mentioned countryman, it seems that the earliest ancestors of the beings of the community, which was later called 'Greece,' were often obliged, on account of the frequent storms at sea which hindered them in their marine occupations, to seek refuge during the rains and winds in sheltered places where out of boredom, they played various 'games' which they invented for their distraction.

"As it later became clear, these ancient fishermen amused themselves at first with such games as children now play there - but children, it must he remarked, who have not yet started contemporary schooling - because the children there who do go to school have so much homework to do, consisting chiefly of learning by rote the 'poetry' which various candidate Hasnamusses have composed there, that the poor children never have time to play any games.

"Briefly, these poor bored fishermen played at first the ordinary children's games already established there long before; but afterwards when one of them invented a new game called 'pouring-from-the-empty-into-the-void,' they were all so pleased with it that thereafter they amused themselves with that alone."

"This game consisted in formulating some question always about some 'fiddle-fuddle' or other, that is to say, a question about some deliberate piece of absurdity, and the one to whom the question was addressed had to give as plausible an answer as possible."

"It turned out that among those ancient bored fishermen, there were several so 'bright' and 'ingenious' that they became expert in inventing, according to the principle of that peculiar 'game,' very long explanations."

"And when one of them discovered how to make what was afterwards called 'parchment' from the skin of the fish called 'shark,' then some of these skilful fellows, just to 'swagger' before their companions, even began inscribing these long explanations of theirs on these fishskins, employing those conventional signs which had been invented earlier, for another game called 'mousetrap.'

"Still a little later, when these bored fishermen had already given place to their descendants, both these inscribed fishskins and the craze for the said peculiar 'game' passed on to the latter by inheritance; and these various new inventions, both their own and their ancestors', they called first by the very high-sounding name 'science.'

"And from then on, as the craze for 'cooking up' these sciences passed from generation to generation, the beings of that group, whose ancestors had been simple Asiatic fishermen. became 'specialists' in inventing all kinds of sciences such as these.

"These sciences, moreover, also passed from generation to generation and a number of them have reached the contemporary beings of that planet almost unchanged.

"And hence it is that almost a half of what are called the 'egoplastikoori' arising in the Reason of the contemporary beings of that ill-fated planet, from which what is called a 'being-world-outlook' is in general formed in beings, are crystallised just from the 'truths' invented there by those bored fishermen and their subsequent generations.

"Concerning the ancient shepherds who later formed the great powerful community called 'Rome,' their ancestors also were often forced, on account of bad weather, to put their flocks into sheltered places, and to pass the time together somehow or other.

"Being together, they had 'various talks.' But when everything had been talked out and they felt bored, then one of them suggested that as a relief they should take up the pastime which they called for the first time 'cinque-contrano' (five-against-one), an occupation which has been preserved down to the present time, under the same name, among their descendants who continue to arise and exist there.

"So long as only the beings of the male sex then engaged in that occupation, everything went 'quietly and peacefully,' but when a little later their 'passive halves,' that is to say their women, also joined in, who, immediately appreciating it, soon became addicted to it, they then gradually attained in these 'occupations' such 'finesses,' that even if our All-universal Arch-cunning Lucifer should rack his honourable brains, he

could not even invent a tithe of the 'turns' these erstwhile shepherds then invented and 'prepared' for the beings of the succeeding generations of that ill-fated planet.

"And so, my boy, when both these independent groupings of terrestrial three-brained beings multiplied and began acquiring every variety of those effective 'means,' namely, the means of reciprocal destruction, whose acquisition is the usual aim of all communities there during all periods of their existence, they then began carrying out these 'processes' with other independent communities there - for the most part, of course, with the less powerful communities, and occasionally among themselves.

"Here it is extremely interesting to notice that when periods of peace occurred between these two communities there - communities of almost equal strength in respect of the possession of efficient means for the processes of reciprocal-destruction - the beings of both groups whose places of existence were adjacent often came into contact and had friendly relations with each other, with the result that little by little they picked up from each other those specialities which had first been invented by their ancestors and which had become proper to them. In other words, the result of the frequent contact of the beings of those two communities was that the Greek beings, borrowing from the Roman beings all the finesses of sexual 'turns,' began arranging their what are called 'Athenian nights,' while the Roman beings, having learned from the Greek beings how to cook up 'sciences,' composed their later very famous what is called 'Roman law.'

"A great deal of time has passed since then. The inventors of both those kinds of being-manifestation have already long been destroyed, and their descendants who chanced to become 'powerful' have been destroyed also. And now ... the contemporary three-brained beings of that planet spend, even with emotion, more than half their existence and being-energy, acquired somehow or other, in absorbing and actualising unconsciously and sometimes even consciously those two ideals, the initiators of whose arising were the said bored Asiatic fishermen and shepherds."

Spreading of the Greek and Roman influences⁹³

Next, Gurdjieff describes the consequences of the developments of these civilisations on Asian and European communities; we listen to Beelzebub:

"Well then, my boy, later on, it seems, when both these groupings of your favourites acquired many of the said efficient means for the successful destruction of the existence of beings like themselves, and when they had become quite expert in persuading, or by the potency of their means compelling beings of other countries to exchange their inner convictions for those ideals invented by their ancestors, then, as I have said, they first conquered the neighbouring communities situated on the continent Europe, and afterwards, for the same purpose, with the help of the hordes they collected during that period, turned towards the continent Asia.

"... At first these 'sowers-of-evil' for all the three-brained beings there of all the succeeding generations, arising on the continent Europe, and especially the Greeks, moving into the interior of the continent Asia, acted if slowly nevertheless effectively.

"But when some time later there appeared and stood at the head of what is called an 'army' that completely formed Arch-Vainglorious Greek, the future Hasnamuss, Alexander of Macedonia, then from that time on, there began to proceed that clean sweep of the last remnants of the results of the very saintly intentional labours of our now Common Cosmic Most Very Saintly Ashiata Shiemash, and again there was resumed, as it is said, the 'old-old-story.'

"Although every time the place of the centre of culture of your favourites, those strange three-brained beings. has been changed, and what is called a new 'civilisation' has arisen, and each new civilisation has brought for the beings of succeeding epochs something both new and maleficent, nevertheless, not one of these numerous civilisations has ever prepared so much evil for the beings of later epochs, including of course the contemporary epoch, as that famous 'Greco-Roman civilisation.'

"Without mentioning the large number of other minor psychic features, unbecoming to be possessed by three-brained beings and now existing in the presence of your favourites, that civilisation is mainly to blame for the complete disappearance from the presence of the three-brained beings of succeeding generations, and especially of the contemporary beings, of the possibility for crystallising the data for 'sane-logical-mentation' and for engendering the impulse of 'being-self-shame.'

"Namely, the 'ancient-Greek-fantastic-sciences' caused complete atrophy of the former, and the 'ancient-Roman- depravity,' of the latter."

Comments on the Beelzebub's Tales style

The above passages from Beelzebub's Tales show Gurdjieff's style of writing^a and his way of presenting information. To study Beelzebub's Tales is not an easy task. Complex syntax of sentences, threads of the stories often broken with frequent digressions, application of new words containing many syllables without vowels, make it unique in world literature. Gurdjieff has the propensity to use many words and the essence of his message is often buried in a long description. Repetition and prolixity of his writing means that grasping the kernel of the matter requires substantial concentration. This style of writing was chosen by Gurdjieff with the purpose of discouraging a casual reader, who might try to absorb his teaching quickly and superficially without deep understanding. While writing Beelzebub's Tales, Gurdjieff often changed his style, especially when he realised that the message was too easily comprehended by his students. In such situations he said that he had to "bury a dog deeper". This style of writing resulted from Gurdjieff's conviction that only knowledge obtained with great effort is appreciated and eventually fixed in the student's

^a The quoted passages belongs to more intelligible

mind. He was not interested in popularising his theories and in gaining renown, but he wanted his teachings to be deeply understood by a group of dedicated pupils. It is worth mentioning that the style of the second part of his work "All and Everything" - "Meetings with Remarkable Men"⁹⁴ - written with a different purpose and containing different kinds of information is very different from the style of Beelzebub's Tales; it is easily readable, although not easily comprehended.

Consequences of the 'fruits of former civilisations'

Gurdjieff very aptly identified two very deleterious human activities: invention of new fantastic theories and an excessive interest in sexuality. Their influence on the life of man is much stronger now than it was during Gurdjieff's times. This was bound to happen, because new theories, transmitted by modern means of communication, spread very easily and can influence rapidly a large part of the population. People accept them more readily because they are presented by so-called 'authorities' or popular television personalities. We are on the receiving end of various theories e.g. how to bring up children or which food is healthy, and if we are gullible, we try to follow such advice. However, if the theory is false or partially correct, it could harm individual people and the whole of society.

Inventing new theories every now and then is done by Hasnamusses working in various fields of science. Such theories may include Darwin's evolution theory mentioned in the previous chapter. A good example of a 'Greek imagination' could be a politically correct theory of the origins and development of ancient civilisations. According to this theory people living in very primitive conditions, engaged in farming or a pastoral life, invented writing, religions, astronomy, mathematics, etc. in their spare time, and developed such magnificent civilisations as the ones of Sumer, Egypt, and of the Indus, or Incas. These theories ignore the fact, supported by archaeological findings, that these civilisations arose very rapidly, but declined very slowly.

We witness a constant stream of new theories practically about everything: education and the upbringing of children, health care etc. Very often we do not realise that they might be wrong because in many cases the results of their application will only be visible in future generations, since a period of a few years is too short to notice any significant social changes.

Among one of the best known and influential theories is that of Dr. Spock^a regarding the rearing of children, that resulted in profound changes of parental attitudes. The application of this theory in the US caused the development of generations of permissive, self-centred children. Although this theory was recognised after

^a Dr. Spock published in 1946 a book about the care and upbringing of children. He presented a new theory of child care based on Freud's findings. He opposed the application of strict rules in guiding the conduct of children and believed that children should not be restricted in their expressions and should be allowed to do what they wished. His approach gained great popularity; 50 million copies of his book were translated into 39 languages and sold world-wide.

many years as partially wrong and was modified by its inventor, in the mean time it had influenced the development of new methods of education and of child care that have now been firmly established in our society. This is an equivalent of the phenomenon of kundabuffer, when, after the removal of originally implanted information, its consequences will remain in people's minds through many generations.

It is worth mentioning the influence of computers on the ways of thinking of contemporary scientists and on the formation of new theories. Computers are often used to confirm and authenticate theories which otherwise could not be verified. So when a computer model of some phenomena is prepared, the results of calculations are treated as indisputable and proven. These results make a strong impression on most people, who do not understand the modelling process. They assume that computers cannot be wrong, therefore the theory supported by computer simulation must be credible. This type of model includes, for example global warming with predictions of cataclysms such as flooding, droughts etc. The application of computers can affect our psyche more profoundly than our rational thinking, and it is the contemporary equivalent of writing on a hundred buffalo parchments by Lentrohamsanin.

An equally harmful legacy inherited from these ancient civilisations includes the mass fascination with sex. Forming one of the most popular pastimes of a large part of contemporary society sex, or rather a perverted form of it that is represented by pornography is preyed upon by the mass media and fed to millions of people by way of stimulating pictures and stories. With the arrival of video recorders and DVD players pornography has become widely available at minimum effort in the privacy of one's own home. The internet, a truly revolutionary means of world communication, offering a great potential of bringing people together, had originally been designed for the intellectual exchange of information between scientists, but is now dominated by the worst kind of pornography and 'live' entertainment. In principle, very little has changed since the Greco-Roman pastimes described by Gurdjieff. Only the technology has improved significantly, enabling mass participation in these activities. What we observe does not show any development of man, but rather points towards stagnation or even decline of mankind. It appears that the interest of a large part of society is concentrated on the gratification of the most primitive and primeval desires with an increasing tendency towards perversion and brutality.

Consequences of modern sciences

Gurdjieff stated that from the Greeks we inherited another legacy, namely a passion for inventing various 'fantastic' sciences. He mentioned the Germans as 'the leaders' in these passions because in the 19th century Germany was at the centre of development of many scientific fields, especially in chemistry. Nowadays many more nations are involved in such scientific passion.

These fantastic branches of science have been developed mainly during the last 150 years, and they have been exerting a large influence on the quality of life of people on Earth. In writing about the development of science, Gurdjieff had foreseen its detrimental influence on people's lives. Problems that he had predicted

eighty years ago are more relevant now than ever before. He criticised the development of sciences that, he felt were responsible for the discoveries of new products which assisted many destructive forces and were in direct opposition to the creative forces of Nature in this way:

"...And now they almost every day invent here and there, some such new invention or new means and, employing them in the process of their existence, have now already brought it about that poor Nature there-already enfeebled without this through no fault of her own- is scarcely able to actualise what are called her 'evolutionary' and 'involutionary' processes."⁹⁵

Harmful effects of the application of many discoveries result from our limited knowledge and understanding of the processes of Nature. "A little knowledge is worse than none" is the saying that reflects the true situation of some sciences. It means that partial knowledge gives people the confidence to apply scientific discoveries without full understanding of the consequences. This situation results from an uneven development of the various fields of sciences. While physics and chemistry have been developed very early and have reached a good level of understanding, medical and biological sciences are still in the early stages of development, and it might take many years before they catch up with the exact sciences. To illustrate the harmful effects of some inventions let us consider examples of application of sciences that show the biggest gaps between knowledge and understanding.

The pernicious effects of the 'fruits' of wrong scientific decisions can be seen from the state of pollution of the environment, which is reaching alarming levels. The intensive development of agriculture has, on the one hand, resulted in a substantial increase of food production and the removal of the horrors of famine. On the other hand, agriculture is responsible, to a great extent, for the destruction of our environment. The application of huge quantities of chemical fertilisers, extremely dangerous chemicals protecting plants against various diseases, pesticides, insecticides, and the usage of hormones and antibiotics in animal farming has had a direct impact on the human body.

Already eighty years ago Gurdjieff warned against the addition of chemical substances to food, at a time when it was not common practice. Nowadays it is so widespread that it is difficult to buy food without any additives. The application of so many chemical substances, as practised in the food industry, is not justified to this extent as in agriculture by increased food production. It is the result of hasnamussian sciences that aimed to improve presentation and taste, reduce calories, lower the cost of manufacturing, extend storage periods, etc. without full knowledge of the long term consequences of such food additives on human organisms^a.

Permission to use new substances is based on the principle: if it is not proven to be harmful, it is safe. This deceptive 'scientific' argument has been impaired many times in the past, when the doses of chemical

^a For example, in the production of white bread, flour that is whitened by the use of chlorine is being used, and sometimes titanium dioxide, normally used in white paints, is being added.

compounds, originally assumed to be safe for human consumption, had to be reduced, over the last 20-40 years, to one hundredth or even thousandth of the original quantities, and some commonly used substances in agriculture such as DDT have been totally banned. This policy raises the question: how many widely used chemical substances used at present will be banned in ten or twenty years time, and how much damage will they have caused in the meantime? It is enough to look at the labels showing food ingredients to realise how many chemicals we consume. If we could think about it we would be shocked to know that we voluntarily poison ourselves. The consequences of the application of so many food additives become increasingly evident and manifest themselves in a substantial increase of incidence of allergies, asthma, cancer, genetic changes and sterility.

Besides the agriculture industry other industries have done massive damage to the environment; cars have caused air and soil pollution by the lead that was added to petrol. Now lead has been replaced with other chemical compounds, but only in 10 or 20 years time, when for many people it will be too late, will we find out if the present fuels are safer. Damage done to Nature, that is widely publicised, is the existence of the ozone hole that has been caused by the application of certain chemicals used in sprays and refrigerators. As a result of this damage, protection of the Earth against harmful cosmic radiation has been substantially reduced. At present the most threatening peril for humankind includes the increase to dangerous levels of the concentration of dioxins in food and, consequently, in the human body^a.

There is no doubt that Gurdjieff was the first who noticed and warned against the uncontrolled application of products resulting from scientific research. He was the first who talked about pollution of the environment, and he treated the planet Earth as a living organism - what was later called the concept of Gaia. He taught about man's responsibility for the proper functioning of this organism, therefore we could call him 'the father' of modern ecology. Nowadays many more people are aware of the damage done to the environment by the uncontrolled development of industries, the production of large amounts of carbon dioxide by burning fossil fuels, the application of chemical substances, etc. The plans to reduce production of carbon dioxide are in place, but they are blocked by hasnamuss politicians, businessman and scientists^b.

^a Dioxins belong to the most dangerous chemical substances and at present they impact on human health as DDT did a few decades ago. Dioxins are generated by incomplete burning of substances containing chlorine, and during some industrial processes. Dioxins in very small quantities cause cancer, but even a hundred times smaller dosage can affect reproductiveness and the development of embryos. Dioxins are so dangerous because they tend to accumulate in the human body and cannot normally be expelled. At present the concentration of dioxins in the human body is close to the old safety limits. However in some countries the safety limits have been reduced from 10pg to 1 pg per kilogram of body weight. (1pg = 1/1,000,000,000,000 gram). In practice this means that, for example, a 60 g portion of fat fish contains the maximum daily allowance (at present) of dioxin for a man of an average weight of 72 kg (158 lb.).

Gurdjieff had especially strong feelings about a topic very close to him - the development of the means of mass destruction. He mentioned, with horror, the application of poison gases that were used for the most barbaric killing of soldiers during the First World War. From that time onwards science has made 'fantastic progress' in this field. Not only more potent chemical weapons, but also bacteriological and nuclear weapons have since been developed. Gurdjieff would be terrified at the level of perfection man has reached in the techniques of mass killing of people.

Gurdjieff also warned against the harmful effects of many substances that nowadays ruin the lives of millions of people, namely narcotics. He particularly identified cocaine, which had been developed and 'popularised' by scientists^a. Since Gurdjieff's time there have been invented many new synthetic narcotics such as LSD or amphetamines. Consumption of these drugs is growing very fast, and drug addiction is one of the most important problems facing the world. Scientists are partially responsible for this aggravated situation.

The above examples show that man, through the development of sciences, is about to destroy the human habitat on Earth. In spite of extensive research his understanding lags well behind his knowledge. Although many dangerous pollutants have been identified and banned, new chemicals are being invented and replacing old ones. The whole process is repeated every 10 -20 years, after we learn that some old products or processes are dangerous. This indicates that man, at the present level of consciousness, is incapable of protecting his environment.

It has to be emphasised that Gurdjieff was not against the sciences, against gaining understanding of, for example, biological processes or laws of physics. He was criticising the uncontrolled application of these sciences to 'improve' or destroy human life. These applications are driven by people with a low level of consciousness, who are mainly interested in their profits or in gaining popularity, but not in the benefit of mankind. Therefore the process of introducing new harmful inventions cannot be stopped.

There exists a commonly held opinion that science is serving humankind, contributing to its progress, helping people in their lives, making life safer and more comfortable. This conviction is based on such achievements as the discovery of antibiotics and other progress in medicine, the development of television and computers and other world-wide communication systems. However, the deeply rooted belief that scientific development is motivated by the need to help people is far from the truth. In reality there are four forces driving the development of science: money, army, national prestige and personal ambition.

^b This type of conduct can be illustrated by the opposition of the US government to the ratification of the Kyoto Agreement controlling the generation of carbon dioxide.

^a Cocaine was isolated from the coca plant by Albert Nieman from Gottingen University in 1860. Soon after this discovery the production of synthetic cocaine was started and become widely available. Freud helped to promote cocaine as a regenerating and invigorating tonic, thereby increasing its popularity.

Many sciences are financed by multinational companies aiming to achieve the highest profits. Many companies, run by hasnamuss businessmen, are not interested in the welfare of people. Amongst the most ruthless and profitable ones we could include pharmaceutical companies which, using man's fear of illness and dying, have 'captive' customers. Although they develop many new drugs, they sell them at such high prices that are beyond the means of the majority of people in Third World countries^a.

The second force driving scientific development is the army. A large proportion of defence budgets in many industrialised countries, especially in the United States, is spent on the development of new and better methods of killing the 'enemy', or on the development of defensive weapons to protect against imaginary dangers. There is also the spending on space research that is mainly driven by national prestige and politics. One could argue that every kind of research increases our knowledge, therefore it is useful. However when we consider the real needs of mankind such as eliminating famines and poverty, providing education and medical care, protecting the environment etc., we can conclude that most of these types of research do not serve mankind.

In many cases the direction of research investigation is determined by scientists whose highest ambition it is to be first to discover new phenomena - sometimes called a "Guinness book of records " syndrome. Certain topics of research such as cloning of animals and human beings are especially prone to this type of influences. Since a large part of academic research is funded by government grants, personal and prestige motives play an important role in setting up the direction of scientific development.

At present, science is a 'god' and often replaces God. We are living in times of fast technical progress and expanding scientific research. People are wonder-struck by the achievements of sciences, especially laymen, and they are unable to see the "other side of the coin" i.e. the detrimental effects of science on man, society and Nature. The problem is not caused by the development of sciences and discoveries, but arises from a low level of consciousness of people who apply discoveries to gain benefits without caring about the welfare and the effects of these discoveries on the lives of others.

Sport

Another harmful 'invention', according to Gurdjieff, that was inherited from the ancient Greeks but popularised by the English, is sport. Beelzebub said this to his grandson:

"And in consequence of the absence in them of this 'logical mentation', all of them, almost without exception, merely because certain candidates for hasnamuss there have asserted that they could obtain something 'good' for themselves by means of sport - an assertion they believed with all their presence - have now, in the hope of attaining this same something, given themselves up entirely to that sport. None of these unfortunates know and probably never will reflect that only is nothing good obtained by them from the

^a For example, drugs helping AIDS victims are not easily available in Africa.

maleficent sport of theirs, but they, as I have already told you, solely owing to this sport alone, still further shorten the duration of their existence which is already trifling without this."⁹⁶

Gurdjieff maintains that sport shortens man's life. He compares man's energy with the energy of a wound watch spring^a and states that the length of man's life depends on the speed of unwinding this spring. He concludes that the energy of the spring of the moving centre is exhausted much faster in a professional sportsman. To support his thesis he said that he did not know any wrestler who lived longer than 49 years.

Of course nowadays professional competitors do not pretend that they do training to improve their health. Today sport is a caricature of the sport in ancient Greece and reminds us very much of a circus where performers display the limits of human possibilities. Famous footballers, rugby and tennis players, world champions or Olympic champions are national heroes known world-wide. Their popularity is greater than that of most prominent scientists, writers or artists. They are idols adored by millions of people. We arrive at the situation where even teenagers stand on the champion's podium. Eighty years ago Gurdjieff could not imagine how sport would develop, but in a prophetic way he had foreseen that it would go in the wrong direction.

Such a statement about the harmful effects of sport might come as a big surprise to many people. From school days we are told about the benefits of sport. However it seems that there are increasing doubts about the benefit of competitive sport. A few years ago a book published by Dr. P. Axt supported Gurdjieff's opinion. Dr. Axt, professor of zoology at Fulda University, himself a marathon runner and active member of the German Track and Field Association stated in his book "On the Joy of Laziness"⁹⁷ that, according to his observation, no top sportsman had lived to a very advanced age. Many of them had died of heart attacks in middle age, although allegedly, endurance sport can strengthen cardiac activity. He mentioned that the most prominent victim of his own obsession with health was Jim Fixx, who popularised jogging in the United States. He died in 1984 at the age of 52. According to Dr. Axt, a 50 years old sportsman can already show significant loss of memory and mental abilities. He does not question the benefits of moderate physical exercise in helping to keep the body fit, and he himself jogs for 20 minutes three times a week.

The results of the latest scientific research show the harmful effects of free radicals^b on the human body. It has been suggested that free radicals can cause damage to human organs such as the heart. People who are

^a Length of man's life was discussed in Chapter 2

^b Free radicals are atoms or groups of atoms with an odd (unpaired) number of electrons and can be formed when oxygen interacts with certain molecules. Once formed these highly reactive radicals can start a chain reaction, like dominoes. Their chief danger comes from the damage they can do when they react with important cellular components such as DNA, or the cell membrane. Cells may function poorly or die if this occurs.

engaged in very heavy physical work, or in intensive physical training tend to use 10-20 times more oxygen than in the resting state and therefore generate a large quantity of free radicals and, possibly shorten their lives in this way.

Chapter 5

Wars and revolutions

There is no doubt that Gurdjieff believed that wars were the greatest evil on Earth and were the cause of the worst human suffering. He himself witnessed many wars and revolutions and his father was killed during the invasion of Armenia by the Turks. The mutual destruction of people was, for him, the most heinous of all crimes in the whole Universe. The subject of wars and revolution is mentioned in "Beelzebub's Tales" many times, and every time this senseless destruction and the atrocity of people, who are not worthy of being called humans, is treated with abhorrence.

Gurdjieff wrote that terrible atrocities had been committed from time immemorial, and stated that already in ancient Egypt they had reached the peaks of bestiality. For example he described that during one of many Egyptian revolutions the elections for chiefs of regions, towns and villages had been organised, and the person who had collected the highest number of eyes gouged out from the heads of bandits and enemies of the revolution would be the winner. All members of the previous ruling class, including women and children, were classified as bandits. In another bloody uprising, a crowd of ordinary Egyptian citizens would string members of the ruling class onto a very long rope, and this 'skewer' was thrown into the river Nile. It is obvious that we do not need Gurdjieff to teach us about the atrocities committed by people. The whole of world history, from antiquity till the present time, is full of the most bestial and cruel deeds. But we need a reminder to make us realise how frequently these atrocities were committed, even by 'civilised' nations in recent times.

Many times in "Beelzebub's Tales" Gurdjieff returns to the Bolshevik revolution, possibly because he himself experienced it. He did not consider it especially cruel or exceptional. He wrote: "I myself have been a witness as I have said, no less than forty times, of exactly similar processes which I would call the process of the 'destruction-of-everything-within-sight'.⁹⁸ He mentioned that during the changes of dynasties in Egypt such atrocities were committed that by comparison with them, contemporary Bolshevism seemed like 'child's play'. He comments ironically that if we compare the bestiality of the ancient Egyptians, "the contemporary Bolsheviks ought even to be given praise and thanks that the dead body of the person shot by them could at least be recognised".⁹⁹ However Gurdjieff did not know about the terrible fate of millions of people who disappeared in the Russian gulags.

An especially harmful consequence of revolutions and civil wars is the destruction of many outstanding individuals having a higher level of consciousness. During a civil war society is divided, in general, into two camps and is under the influence of a peculiar psychosis. It manifests itself in the fact that people's minds tend to lose their normal characteristics and become bestial as a result of fighting and continuous killings. In such situations, people with a high level of consciousness can become innocent victims of the revolution.

This kind of people, being truly free, do not identify, like others, with the populist slogans and ideology of either side, and they are unable to share the attraction, enthusiasm and sentiments of the revolutionary mass of people. During peace time these outstanding individuals are always warm-hearted and helping others, and are treated with high esteem. However, in times of a revolution, they are treated with suspicion by both sides, because they do not support either side, and are suspected of favouring the opposition, or they might be killed because they are different.¹⁰⁰

Gurdjieff claimed that revolutions and civil wars could be more destructive and harmful to society than wars and could cause a long lasting wound that would heal very slowly. In the case of civil war a front line passes through every town and village, through every household. Revolutions destroy society from inside. Brother kills brother, son kills father and friend kills friend. This type of killing advances the development of the worst kinds of bestiality, destroys human feelings, leaving long-lasting hate. To this type of event belongs the civil war in Spain, the consequences of which lasted more than half a century. Revolutions divide society and paralyse human reflexes, while wars, very often not less bestial, in general unite society and trigger impulses of mutual support and help, including sacrificing one's own life for others.

What are the causes of revolutions and civil wars? Gurdjieff maintained that one of the main causes is the division of society into classes and casts. He believed that this happened when one group of people, who were more clever and ruthless and had a military advantage, tried to gain privileges and power at the cost of others. By means of terrorising others they could force them to contribute to their own wealth. People working for the ruling class tried to get rid of this burden and passed their own dues on to others, weaker and more frightened than themselves. That way further divisions of society would arise. Because the relationship between the classes is based on force, they tend to hate each other and envy everybody above themselves.

Gurdjieff ponders why the mutual destruction processes occur so regularly. He believed that people periodically feel an urge to change their living conditions. In some people, especially those who have already developed a higher level of consciousness, this urge drives them to work on themselves and to develop further their consciousness and Objective Reason. In people with a low level of consciousness a process called, by Gurdjieff, 'a need of freedom' might take place. This collective process involves a large group of people, and when the social conditions are favourable, quickly evolves into a revolution or war. This impulse of 'a need of freedom' results in people's fear of the ruling classes to decrease and the hatred of them to increase. A revolution starts to develop when the fear is lower than the hatred.

Gurdjieff satirically describes the beginnings of a revolution like this: "It always begins with this, that several beings from one or another grouping, namely, those in whom for some reason or other there were previously crystallised data stronger than in other beings they begin as is said there to 'clamour', and these 'clamouring orators' become in relation to those around them such as are at the present time there usually called 'leaders'... When these 'clamourers' among the ordinary beings begin already, excessively

cacophonically, to act upon what are called 'the-effeminate-nerves-of-the-left-half' of several of the power possessing beings of the given community, and these latter order those job it is to grease with what called 'Scottish cream' the navels of several particularly loud-voice clamourers, then there begin these excesses of theirs which, progressively increasing, reach their zenith, yet to their misfortune ultimately always lead to nothing."¹⁰¹

Revolutions themselves would not be so bad, if they could advance the improvement of living conditions of average people. However, unfortunately no revolution leads to any real changes. After ending the fighting the same situation recurs again. The existence of an average person becomes worse and worse and the purpose of fighting fades away. This happens because usually the new leaders who are replacing the old ruling class do not have any experience of governing a country. They do not have the personalities and abilities to conduct complex social changes that are needed to bring benefits to an average man. The new leaders, as the old one, do not manifest any impulses of consciousness, and their behaviour is driven by pride, vanity, lust for power, conceit and self-love. What is worse, since their desires were never fulfilled before, they now exert a strong hold upon them. To sum up - the new ruling class is even worse than the old one and as a result of their incompetence and corruption the existence of ordinary people gets worse and their standard of living even lower than before. Such a situation could be observed, for example, in many African countries, where the removal of the white colonialists resulted in the emergence of the worst regimes in the world and in deep disappointment of ordinary people because their expectations of a higher standard of living were never fulfilled. One of a very few exceptions to the described process was the outcome of the War of Independence and formation of the United States of America. Although it was a typical brutal civil war initiated by a few rich malcontents, thanks to a few leaders with a higher level of collective consciousness, it helped to create a new nation, which, although far from ideal, had at least guaranteed basic human rights for its citizens^a.

Gurdjieff explains that the domination of one group of people is the main cause for the outbreaks of revolutions. He does not justify the existence of fighting, and reckons that they are the worst misfortunes that can affect people, but he also condemns social injustice and class domination leading to revolutions. According to him, a low level of consciousness of individual members of society is responsible for such a situation. It is difficult to imagine that a fully conscious person could torture and murder other people, only to 'convince' them that one political or social system is better than the other. But he emphasised that a man with a high level of consciousness would not exploit other people for his own material benefits. Gurdjieff showed that the situation of people is hopeless, that there is no solution at present to their predicament. Regardless of what we do, if we accept the oppressive regime, or fight against it, the situation of an ordinary person will be the same.

^a The original US constitution did not guarantee rights to slaves and women.

Processes of mutual killing

Gurdjieff maintained that, normally, people are not apt to kill other people, but during wars they do it as a result of the process that Beelzebub describes to his grandson in this way:

"And indeed, my boy, during these processes, they usually instinctively at first refrain from such an unnatural manifestation, but later when every one of them already in the environment of the process itself willy-nilly sees and becomes convinced that the destruction of the existence of those similar to themselves proceeds so simply, and that the number of the destroyed always grows and grows - well then, each of them involuntarily begins instinctively to feel and automatically to value his own existence. And having become persuaded by his own eyes that the possibility of losing his own existence depends, at the given moment, absolutely only on the number of beings of the enemy side not destroyed, then in consequence of the strengthened functioning in his imagination of the presence of the impulse called 'cowardice', and on account of the impossibility at each moment of reasonable deliberation by his being-mentation, weakened already without this, he begins from a natural feeling of self-preservation to strive with all his Being to destroy as many as possible of the existences of the beings of the enemy side in order to have the greater chance of saving his own existence. And gradually progressing in this feeling of self-preservation of theirs, they then reach the state, as they themselves say, of 'bestiality'."¹⁰²

Gurdjieff believed that new weapons, effective over a long distance, make the killing process much easier. Man possesses a strong psychological inhibition preventing him from killing somebody near him, e.g. using a knife or bayonet, because it causes great stress in people. However killing from a distance when you cannot see the face of your opponent is much easier. Initially rifles, and now the latest advanced weapons such as aeroplanes and rockets make it possible to kill thousands of people without causing substantial anxiety in the perpetrators.

Konrad Lorenz^a writes about this process: " The distance at which all shooting weapons take effect screens the killer against the stimulus situation which otherwise activates his killing inhibitions. The deep emotional layers of our personality simply do not register the fact that the crooking of the forefinger to release a shot tears out the entrails of another man. ... The same principle applies to an even greater degree to the use of modern remote-control weapons. The man who presses the releasing button is so completely screened against seeing, hearing or otherwise emotionally realising the consequences of his action, that he can commit it with impunity - even if he is burdened with the power of imagination. Only thus can it be explained that perfectly good-natured men, who would not even smack a naughty child, proved to be perfectly able to release rockets or to lay carpets of incendiary bombs on sleeping cities, thereby committing hundreds and thousands of children to a horrible death in the flames."¹⁰³

^a Konrad Lorenz is the father of modern ethology - a branch of science concerned with animal behaviour. He is a Nobel prize laureate.

In modern wars killing becomes easier - technically and psychologically. Leaders giving orders and soldiers following them do not see their victims. We have now reached a monstrous situation when one person can annihilate millions of people. We have developed new technologies protecting our soldiers against danger and being subjected to stress resulting from killing, but this technology enables us to destroy an enemy much more easily than ever before. This is possible because we have developed double standards as far as the value of human life is concerned. The life of 'our man' is sacred, but the death of our 'enemy' is of no importance. The latest development in the USA of an unmanned combat aircraft, enabling killing the enemy without the slightest personal risk to oneself is the best illustration of this 'philosophy of killing'.

International organisations

In Beelzebub's Tales Hassein asks his grandfather:

"And so, my dear Grandfather, I cannot at all understand how it can happen that in spite of having existed over such a long period, they have not yet become aware and until now continue to be unaware of the horror of this property of theirs. Don't they really ever see that these processes of theirs are the most terrible of all the horrors which can possibly exist in the whole of the Universe, and don't they ever ponder on this matter, so that they might become aware of this horror and find a means of eradicating it?"¹⁰⁴

Beelzebub explains the situation to his grandson:

"Of course they ponder, of course they see.... Yet unfortunately, from this pondering of these three-brained beings there, no sense at all is ever obtained. And no sense is ever obtained, partly because only isolated beings there ponder over this matter, and partly thanks to the absence there, as usual, of one common-planetary organisation for a single line of action; and therefore, if even the mentioned isolated beings ponder over this question and constate something sensible about this horror, this constating of theirs is never widely spread and fails to penetrate into the consciousness of other beings."¹⁰⁵

According to Gurdjieff the main cause of lack of progress in preventing wars could be found in the ruling classes. Only the ruling classes could make an effective contribution in this field. In contemporary democracies, not to mention totalitarian regimes, the ruling classes do not differ from the rest of society as far as the level of consciousness is concerned, but some of their characteristics such as vanity, pride, self-love, greed, conceit etc., are especially conspicuous. These people have the opportunity to prevent wars, but they do not do it because it is against their interests. Likewise Gurdjieff blames the education of young people for this situation, which does not prepare them to become future leaders to be responsible for other people.

An institution that could reduce the incidence of wars could be an organisation such as the 'League of Nations'. It could offer a forum for negotiation between the opposing sides. It could facilitate the resolution of problems not by force but by understanding, by reaching a compromise. Gurdjieff said that in the past

there were many attempts to establish such an organisation, but they always died a natural death¹⁰⁶. Usually such organisations were formed at the end of exhausting and destructive wars, when people with a higher level of consciousness tried to prevent the outbreaks of future wars and mutual destruction. They met to find ways to eliminate such terrible processes. Soon these organisations were joined by other 'important' power-possessing individuals, who were not interested in finding a solution to these problems, but wanted to secure an influential position in such an important organisation for themselves. These 'important' persons, 'threw overboard' all the accomplished tasks after joining, effectively wrecking the achievements of this association. Gurdjieff maintained that international organisations could be effective if they included people with a developed consciousness. Without these kinds of people no organisation would fulfil its objectives.

Gurdjieff explained that it is not possible to stop mutual killings at once. To change the situation it would be important to start with the removal of some common, deeply rooted convictions such as the glorification of armed forces, treating soldiers like heroes and giving them medals and honours. The army, when it has power or great authority in a society, will aim to increase its strength and armaments, and might cause wars to show its own importance and justification for existence. Unfortunately Gurdjieff's advice has not been implemented yet, rather the opposite. The army still holds a very influential position in society being a favourite in almost every country. This situation will continue because of a general perception that a nation with a strong army is feared and treated by others with high esteem. Until such times when the conviction that force is the only argument of 'persuasion' disappears, the army will play a dominant role. Strong nations love war because winning wars brings glory not only to the army but to the whole nation.

Psychological causes of mutual destruction

Beyond 'officially' recognised causes of mutual annihilation such as historical, political, nationalistic or economic, there must exist other reasons that trigger these terrible events. We know that the outbreak of many wars and revolutions was caused by seemingly trivial reasons, but the fighting was conducted in such a brutal and savage way, that it is difficult to find an explanation for such events. We know that fighting tends to be localised in some parts of the world more than others, for example, Gurdjieff wrote that Beelzebub visited Afghanistan to study the origins and development of wars, because in this corner of the world there had been more fighting than anywhere else. Unfortunately since the Beelzebub visit nothing has changed there.

Gurdjieff explains the origins of mutual killings by using a cosmic parallel. This parallel was introduced in Chapter 2 when the genesis of the organ kundabuffer was being presented. It describes the cosmic catastrophe that had created two objects: the Moon and Anulios. To enable the stable functioning of these objects, there was a need for a special substance called askokin. Askokin exists in the Universe mixed with two other components, but to be active it must be separated from them. These two components are used to

make a body called kerdjan and a body called soul^a. Normally the separation of askokin from these two components happens during the death of beings living on Earth. However people are able to produce askokin as a result of their conscious labours and intentional suffering^b. If people were able to work consciously, then the amount of askokin created would be sufficient to supply the Moon and Anulios as happened during the period when people were following Ashiata Shiemash's teachings. At that time people performed conscious labour, created askokin, and therefore there were no wars and killings. However when askokin is not produced voluntarily, Nature demands that it must be produced in a different way, namely as a result of man's death. Therefore, in order to obtain the sacred substance of askokin, Nature compels people to perform the process of mutual destruction.

One could say that this parallel makes sense. The mutual destruction of people is caused, indirectly, by the lack of a sufficient amount of askokin because wars result from the action of people with a low level of consciousness who are unable to carry out conscious labours and intentional suffering. If people could create askokin, then their level of consciousness and Objective Reason would be so high as to prevent any killings from happening.

Gurdjieff was looking for an answer to this question: why does there exist in man an internal drive to kill others? He arrived at the conclusion that as a result of the unnatural existence of many generations and of difficult external living conditions, there exists in the human psyche a recurring need for mutual killing and destruction. Because people are not aware of the existence of this trait in them, therefore individual people may not be responsible for the outbreak of wars and revolutions, but are unconscious instruments of these processes.

Freud explained the origin of man's aggression in a similar way. He maintained that man has an inborn tendency to aggression that originates from the primordial death instinct. According to him this natural predisposition is responsible for the worst cruelties on Earth, from the conquest of Ghengis Khan to the horrors of the First World War. He maintained that society supports this characteristic if the aggression is directed to an outside group. He showed that there exists a possibility that a group of people having a common aggressive goal can be very closely united.¹⁰⁷ Operation of this mechanism can be observed in various groups of people occupying neighbouring territories, e.g. the Jews and the Palestinians, or the Indians and the Pakistanis, where hate and tension between the groups helps to increase the cohesion of the groups. Also the events in the 20th century Europe support this thesis e.g. Hitler united the Germans by guiding their hate towards the common enemy - the Jews, and Stalin united the Communists by directing their hate towards the bourgeoisie.

^a See Chapter 8.

^b See Chapter 7.

There is a very clear but also very pessimistic conclusion of the above analysis of the causes of wars. Gurdjieff maintained that no matter what effort people at a low level of consciousness would undertake to prevent wars, it would not guarantee any long-lasting results. According to him wars and mutual destruction is unavoidable in such a situation. Only the development of man's consciousness could permanently remove these terrible events from the lives of people.

'Militant enthusiasm'

Konrad Lorenz in his book "On Aggression"¹⁰⁸ carries out a comprehensive analysis of the causes of the aggressive behaviour of people. He believed that: "these deepest strata of human personality are, in their dynamics, not essentially different from the instincts of animals, but on their basis human culture has erected all the enormous superstructure of social norms and rites."¹⁰⁹ He draws a conclusion that "man's social organisation is very similar to that of rats which, like humans, are social and peaceful beings within their clans, but veritable devils towards all fellow-members of their species not belonging to their own community."¹¹⁰ Man, like many animals, possesses a strong aggressive drive, which normally is directed to members outside his own community. Attacks on members of his group are forbidden by taboos and social rules. Lorenz gives an example of North American Prairie Indians from the Ute tribe who were compelled to commit suicide if they were found responsible for killing a member of their own tribe.

Besides individual aggression Lorenz distinguished a form of collective aggression which he calls 'militant enthusiasm'. According to him this type of aggression originates in certain processes of education of young people, in whose psyche ideas such as love of their country or community, religious faith, or beliefs in Communism are embedded - and calls it 'object-fixation'. He states that 'militant enthusiasm' is a truly autonomous instinct in man. It has its own behaviour, its own releasing mechanism and it engenders a specific feeling of intense satisfaction. It manifests itself very frequently because humanity is normally divided into opposing camps. It can be elicited when the following conditions are fulfilled: the feeling of threat to a group with which the person identifies himself, the presence of a hateful enemy, the existence of an inspiring leader, and the most important one - the presence of many other individuals all excited by the same goal¹¹¹.

Man in the state of 'militant enthusiasm' feels that he is above everyday life and duties, and the protection of his idea, group or country becomes his holy duty. The instinctive inhibition of hurting or killing others is greatly weakened. Rational thinking, critical analysis, ability to discuss, is reduced by reversing normal human values. People in this state have a feeling of being absolutely right, even when they commit the worst possible atrocities.

An analysis of the origin of wars and revolutions, as presented by Lorenz, is as pessimistic as that of Gurdjieff's, but it also shows how deeply the causes of aggression are rooted in our psyche. In contrast to Gurdjieff, Lorenz does not propose an effective solution to this problem. His suggestions how to improve

the situation are limited to the propagation and the development of the sciences and Art that should bring people together; likewise he suggests popularisation of sport as a factor of developing international contacts and relieving the feeling of aggression in a controllable way. However changing man's instinctive behaviour is not an easy task, and a rational approach like Lorenz's cannot give lasting results. By contrast, Gurdjieff maintained that only people on a higher level of consciousness could control their instincts in an effective way.

Evaluation of Gurdjieff's analysis

When we consider the last fifty years of world history, we should be able to notice that although the frequency of military conflicts is not decreasing, there has not broken out a world-wide war during this period. Does this fact somehow undermine Gurdjieff's analysis?

In the second half of the 20th century the world was dominated by two superpowers, possessing a large nuclear arsenal. Because scientists and military experts on both sides had arrived at the conclusion that after a nuclear war there would be no winners, this mutual fear of total annihilation protected us against the development of any larger conflict. However in situations where such a threat was not present, we could observe continued mutual destruction of exceptional brutality, e.g. during the wars in Vietnam and Iraq.

At present, the world is dominated by only one superpower - the United States. Although there is no attempt to conquer other countries, the US is keen to secure its interests and maintain world domination. At the same time the USA is playing a policing role in its relationship with weaker countries such as Serbia, Iraq or Afghanistan, forcing them to stop aggressive actions, and trying to prevent terrorist attacks against other countries. Other stronger nations such as China, India or Pakistan, being economically dependent on the West, have restrained their military behaviour for the time being. Therefore one could say that the political and military situation is much more stable than it was during Gurdjieff's times. However, any change of the political or military balance in the world, e.g. increased power of China or India, or isolationist policy of the United States, could destabilise this situation and lead to large-scale conflicts.

There are also other reasons for such a long period of peaceful co-existence. After the Second World War, Japan and Germany, two most aggressive nations in the 20th century, quickly realised that they do not need to physically conquer other countries to subordinate them. The domination can be achieved using economic means. Economically strong countries can control weaker nations by giving them loans or buying their banks, industry and means of communication. They do not have to start a war to gain cheap labour. Nowadays millions of emigrants work in the USA, Germany, France or the UK for low wages doing the worst possible jobs without any compulsion; on the contrary, they even risk their lives to get to this 'paradise'. On the world scale military aggression has been replaced by less visible economic aggression. As a result of this action people are not killed, but the amount of suffering caused by unemployment, starvation or emigration has substantially increased.

Where does man's aggression find its outlets during peaceful times? Lorenz maintains that animals, in order to avoid unnecessary killing and hurting each other, have developed ritual fights that play an important role in natural selection. A similar role was fulfilled in medieval times by ritual combats of knights representing opposing camps, and in that way preventing large bloodshed. Lorenz believes that sport, that contains elements of aggression, could be classified as a ritual fight. It is sufficient to observe international football matches to notice that fanatic supporters are not interested in enjoying the game, they purely want their team to win, win at any cost. Their chauvinism and hatred of the opponents can result in bloody battles or even mutual killings. Lorenz maintained that international competitions play an important role because they relieve accumulated 'military enthusiasm' and develop contacts between hostile groups. One could say that sport matches are ersatz wars and might give relief to psychological forces that are the cause of wars.

Chapter 6

Development of religious beliefs and systems

According to Gurdjieff religion is one of the most meaningful components of our lives and has an important function to fulfil. Our religious beliefs shape our philosophy of life, affect our decisions and have influence on the development of our consciousness. The development of religious beliefs is a very complex process, and because it took place thousands of years ago, we know very little about it. An additional impediment originates from the attitude of contemporary Churches that are not interested in providing information about the origins of their beliefs and doctrines. From the moment when various beliefs were transferred into religious dogmas, the possibility of any rational study of their origins disappeared and there is virtually no chance to discover its source. Any discussion of this topic is treated by the Churches as heresy, blasphemy or even an attack on the faith itself.

Gurdjieff approached this difficult subject, like all the others, with full sincerity and courage. He tried to discover the sources of our fundamental beliefs, and he showed that what we believe in has very little in common with believing in God. Substantiating the true sources of man's beliefs is practically impossible, therefore Gurdjieff concentrates rather on the mechanisms and processes of their coming into being. These processes depend mainly on man's psyche that has been formed by the consequences of the functioning of the organ kundabuffer and on the social and economic conditions of people living at the times of their origins.

Ultimately, it is not important if these beliefs came into being in the way described by Gurdjieff, and we will never find out what really happened. However it is important to understand the causes and mechanisms of their development and the reasons of our belief in various religious dogmas. In his analysis, Gurdjieff concentrates on a few widely held beliefs only, which he considers to be the most detrimental to man's further development.

The Concept of Good and Evil

Gurdjieff considers the concept of Good and Evil as one of the most pernicious ideas, a concept that is deeply rooted in the sphere of our beliefs¹¹². He maintains that this idea is responsible for the distortion of the human psyche. In 'Beelzebub's Tales' he wrote:

"When this maleficent there gradually took on such a definite form and began to be for the psyche of your favourites what is called an 'actualising factor' for the crystallisation in their common presence of data for the fantastic notion, namely, that outside of them there exist, as it were, objective sources of 'Good and Evil' acting upon their essence; then from that time on, other peculiar data - at first spontaneously and later through their strange consciousness - began to be crystallised in the general psyche of each of them, which

data, owing to automatic being-associations, engender the conviction that the causes of all their manifestations, both good and bad, are not they themselves personally nor their own criminal essence-egoism, but some or other external foreign influences not depending on them at all.

"The fundamental evil, for all these unfortunates, from this fantastic idea resulted there chiefly because, even before this - of course thanks always to the same conditions of ordinary being-existence established by them themselves - data ceased to be crystallised in them for the engendering of what is called 'various being-aspects of a world view', and instead of this a 'world view' is formed in them based exclusively on that maleficent idea about external Good and Evil."

"And indeed at the present time there, your favourites have already based all questions without exception, questions concerning ordinary being-existence as well as questions about self-perfecting and also about various 'philosophies' and every kind of 'science' existing there, and of course also about their innumerable 'religious teachings' and even their notorious what are called 'morality', 'politics', 'laws', 'morals', and so on, exclusively on the fantastic but for themselves in an objective sense very maleficent idea".¹¹³

Gurdjieff considers the idea of Good and Evil especially harmful because it enables people to justify their wrong deeds so that they might become convinced that they are not responsible for anything, and cannot do anything to improve a particular situation. This idea can lead to a passive attitude to life and can be used to justify man's lack of any effort to develop himself.

Origins of man's soul, Paradise and Hell

Belief in the existence of an immortal soul in every person, according to Gurdjieff, also impedes work on self development. It is linked to his theory that states that a soul is created as a result of the work on self development when man has achieved a certain level of Objective Reason. If we assume that at birth we possess a soul, we could arrive at the conclusion that there is no need to work on the development of a soul.

The origins and circumstances of this belief are presented by Gurdjieff in the form of a legend about the king Konuzion¹¹⁴. King Konuzion reined in one of the Asian countries many centuries before the existence of the Babylonian state. In his country a passion for chewing poppy seeds containing strong drugs had developed. This habit had changed people's way of life, their vision and understanding of reality and as a consequence they stopped working. Seeing the results of this habit, King Konuzion commanded that all citizens of his country stop chewing the seeds. In spite of harsh punishments and fines, however, the number of drug-takers kept increasing. Even when the king introduced harsher punishments still and increased police surveillance, the desired effect could not be obtained and the number of users continued to grow. It became clear to the king that many people, who were earlier not interested in the drug, started using it due to curiosity and because it had been forbidden. The country was in decline because fewer and fewer people worked and paid taxes.

Finally King Konuzion arrived at the conclusion that it would not be possible to eradicate this passion using punishment, unless it was the death penalty. Then he decided to abrogate all the measures he had taken and began to look for a different solution. After long meditation he invented a new religious doctrine. According to this doctrine, on an island far away, there existed 'Mister God' who had intentionally attached bodies to our souls that could serve him. When people die, their souls are liberated from their bodies and are taken to this island. Depending on how the soul has fulfilled its duty it is allocated an appropriate place for its further existence. If a soul has fulfilled its duty consciously and honestly, it could stay on the island. If the soul was idle and had discharged its duties negligently, or had not kept its commandments, but had only existed for the gratification of its desires, then it was sent to a neighbouring island.

This doctrine stated that all continents and islands had been created by 'Mister God' to serve him and everything that was needed on his island, which was called Paradise, had been prepared for all good souls. Paradise was a place full of beauty and splendour, a land of milk and honey, filled with the most exquisite food. There were many young and beautiful women, who could belong to any soul that desired them. Jewels, including diamonds and turquoise were lying in public places, which were full of the best sweets, spices and drugs.

Another small island where the lazy and bad souls would be sent was called Hell. All the rivers there were full of flowing fire, and the air had a terrible stench. All the floors, carpets, chairs and beds included thousands of small needles that would be piercing the bodies. Each soul received only one salted biscuit, and on the whole island there was not even a drop of water. There were many ingenious tools used to torture the bad souls.

This fantastic doctrine was very quickly accepted by the king's subjects and consequently the drug-taking completely stopped. Nobody questioned or doubted this doctrine, even after Konuzion death.

Gurdjieff maintained that further evolution and establishment of this idea took place in Babylon. The dualistic doctrine that had been developed there and is believed till the present time stated that in man's physical body there exists another delicate and invisible body called the soul. This soul is immortal, i.e. indestructible, and exists from the moment of birth. The soul must suffer the consequences of every action of the physical body, regardless whether voluntary or involuntary. When man is born, two invisible 'spirits' perch on his shoulders. On his right shoulder there sits a good 'spirit' called the angel, who records only good deeds in a special notebook, and on his left shoulder there sits a bad 'spirit' called the devil who records only bad deeds in his book. The angel strives to make man perform good deeds and refrain from bad deeds, and the devil does the opposite. These two spirits are always contending with each other to rule over any individual.

When a man dies these spirits take his soul to God, who exists somewhere in Heaven, and on a pair of scales weighs the devil's and angel's notebooks. Depending on which pan moves lower, the angel takes the soul to Paradise or the devil takes it to Hell. Paradise is a realm of indescribable beauty, abundant in magnificent

fruits and flowers, full of cherubs and seraphic music, and many other marvels, and, according to the perception of people living in those times, able to satisfy their every desire. Hell is terribly hot, without vegetation and water. Everywhere are instruments of torture as in the Hell described in the legend of King Konuzion¹¹⁵.

Zoroastrian traditions

Mithraism belongs to the earliest monotheistic religious systems and originated probably from the period when Indo-European tribes that lived east of the Volga river on the Russian steppes migrated into the present region of Iran. This religion was fully revised and modernised by Zoroaster, probably around 1700 BC, and from that time is also known under the name of Zoroastrianism. The latest research shows that many beliefs of other contemporary religions had been borrowed from the Zoroastrian religion¹¹⁶. For example the idea of Good and Evil had played a very important role in the Zoroastrian doctrine. One school presented evil as a spirit, independent of God, that was acting on man and causing all the terrible things on Earth. They also claimed that God is not omnipotent.

Zoroaster was the first to develop the doctrines of an individual judgement, viz. judgement of a man for his deeds, the concept of Heaven and Hell, the resurrection of the body, the Last Judgement, life everlasting and reunification of the soul and the body. According to this religion all people are equal and all souls are awaiting resurrection and reunification with their bodies.

The Zoroastrian doctrines were well thought out and very practical. They reflected the needs of contemporary people who, for example, considered that being in Paradise with their old body would not bring much pleasure. Therefore Zoroastrians buried skeletons only^a to ensure that on the Last Judgement they would get new bodies. They believed that before the end of the world there would come a Redeemer who would save the believers. The Saviour would be born by a virgin who would conceive while bathing in a holy lake.

The doctrines of the Zoroastrian religion were adopted by the Babylonians, after they had been conquered by the Persians. When Cyrus the Great allowed the Jews in the 6th century BC to return from Babylon to Israel after a period of exile, they were very receptive to Zoroastrian influences and included many doctrines into Judaism. These beliefs in turn were adopted by Christianity and Islam. When Babylon was conquered by Alexander the Great, Zoroastrian ideas spread to Greece and later to Rome, where in the 3rd and 4th centuries AD found many followers, especially among the army.

^a From this belief originated a custom of leaving dead bodies in the field for vultures to clean the skeletons from the flesh.

Function of the religious beliefs

Gurdjieff stated that these, as he called them, 'fictitious' and 'fantastic' beliefs, were invented by people as a result of the consequences of the organ kundabuffer. He maintained that they impede the development of man's consciousness and they should be rejected. But we should note that many beliefs came into being as a result of psychological and social needs of people living at those times.

The concept of Hell as a place of torment for those souls who had committed bad deeds on Earth arose out of a strong need for justice, since people who were facing continuous injustice and suffering in everyday life needed a faith that would promise them rewards for their misery in the next life. Likewise, reassurance that their persecutors, who were too powerful to be punished while alive, would receive punishment after their death. Such strong faith and fear of hell fulfilled a protective function by preventing the rich and powerful from abusing their powers and committing wicked acts against underprivileged persons. Moreover, from a sense of fairness an 'intermediate' place - Purgatory was created, for people having a similar number of good and bad deeds, with a grey and boring existence. One could conclude that some of the consequences of the organ kundabuffer played, to some degree, a positive function because it helped to create beliefs that fulfilled an important social service.

Gurdjieff was not a follower of any religion, but he never exerted any influence on his students to reject their beliefs. He knew that faith had an important role to fulfil, but only the development of higher consciousness and Objective Reason would free man from such superfluous beliefs that would become.

Origins of main religions

Gurdjieff stated that all presently active religions originated from two sources, human intellect and Revelation. The first group of religions came into being as a result of work of outstanding individuals such as Confucius and Zoroaster^a. One could say, with great simplification, that the creators of these religions established a set of beliefs and a code of moral behaviour that was based on logical reasoning. These individuals wanted to show people the way to Redemption, but they also wanted to establish a civilised society that would provide protection for everybody. However, these religions were hijacked by the ruling classes, who used them to increase their power over weaker sections of society. In this they were helped by the class of priests, who added new dogmas and rituals to the original teachings, making believers totally dependent on them. For example, they established many rites and rituals that had to be performed from birth till death to protect people against evil spirits, or advised which days were good for business and personal decisions. Since one had to pay for each service, the class of priests increasingly grew bigger and more influential, and in some countries such as India began to form a hermetic cast.

^a Catholic Encyclopaedia says: "Mithraism is the highest achievable result of human mind created without any help of Revelation". (The Catholic Encyclopaedia, New York, Robert Appleton Co. 1907-9, 11, p. 156.

The second group of religions originated from instructions received from 'special messengers from above'. Gurdjieff said this about their origins:

"...the results of the consequences of the organ Kundabuffer, invented and later removed by these sacred Individuals, began to become crystallised...then our ABUNDANTLY LOVING COMMON FATHER condescended to actualise sometimes in the common presence of certain of them wherever they may arise the germ of a sacred Individual, so that these latter being completely formed up to a responsible age and acquiring Reason...should become aware of reality and indicate to the surrounding beings similar to themselves, how they ought, with the Reason present in them, to guide the process of the functioning of their separate spiritualised parts, in order in this way to decrystallised the already crystallised consequences of the properties of the organ Kundabuffer, and also to succeed in destroying in themselves the predisposition to new crystallisations.¹¹⁷

These sacred Individuals came to preach on Earth during various periods and through their teachings they wanted to change and improve the lives of people. To the most important messengers whose teachings originated new religions, that still exist to the present day, belong Buddha, Moses, Jesus Christ, Muhammad and Lama. After the death of these individuals, their disciples presented the messenger's teaching in the form of religious commandments, so that it would be preserved and transmitted to future generations. However, the original teachings were gradually changed by many generations of the followers because the disciples had understood them too literally, and had not considered the specific circumstances of their origins. Very often these teachings that, even right from the beginning were not correctly understood, were further distorted with the passage of time, especially when the ruling classes began modifying them in such a way that they could be used for their own advantage and egoistic aims. Similar processes occurred in many other religions, where religious beliefs were exploited by the ruling classes to exert power over the weaker classes¹¹⁸.

One of the best documented examples of interference with religious dogmas by powerful rulers can be seen from the politics of the Roman emperor Constantine the Great, who used Christianity to consolidate his empire. His power stretched from present-day Spain to the Middle East and Egypt, and included a variety of ethnic groups following different religious beliefs. The Roman State religion was polytheistic and had not evoked strong beliefs and a sense of unity and belonging to the community, therefore it was not suitable for the whole empire. Constantine realised that Christianity demanded a deep faith and had already been accepted by various ethnic groups. Thus it could better fulfil the role of a State religion and would help to unite and consolidate his empire. Under his influence and even pressure, the Christian Church introduced several new and highly controversial religious dogmas during the synod in Nicaei. The most important dogma considered Jesus Christ equal to God, which resulted in a deep division of the Church. Constantine, who was a follower of Mithraism and was not even baptised, took part in the debates and even directed the proceedings of the synod. What is interesting to know, is that he 'revoked' this dogma three years after the

synod when the political situation demanded it¹¹⁹. It is worth mentioning that possibly during this period all early copies of the Gospel disappeared including many Roman documents that made reference to the events in Judei during the period of Christ's teaching and death^a.

According to Gurdjieff the second cause of distortion of 'messenger teaching' was the activity of persons he called 'psychopaths' and parasites'. These type of people, devoid of any feelings of responsibility for their actions and for the lives of other people, when they became 'authorities' on matters of theology, interpreted the original teaching in accordance with their own individual belief¹²⁰. As a result of such an attitude of the Fathers of the Church, with the support of the ruling classes, all religions, regardless of their main doctrine, became divided into many sects. As a consequence of the different interpretations of some insignificant theological facts, at present there exist thousands of various religious sects in the world. Their members do not call themselves sectarians, but they are called such a name by other competing sects. History teaches us that when one sect gains many followers and has a large army, it dominates and eventually removes other sects, and in this way becomes a state religion.

Gurdjieff used strong expressions when he talked about the development of religious beliefs, and the past and present state of Churches shows that division into so many different religious groups has no rational explanation^b. For example, since its beginnings Christianity suffered the continuous appearance of new 'heresies' and schisms that were very often brutally suppressed. Many of these deep divisions ended in civil wars ultimately establishing new Churches. In the 17th c. the Catholic Church was threatened by schisms to such an extent that it did not want to make the Gospels accessible to ordinary members of the Church, out of fear that this would help the spread of new heresies¹²¹. This was probably the right decision, since the Protestant churches, where the followers had direct contact with the Bible, began to split into different sects and religious groups.

The situation in Islam is no better, since right from the beginning the followers separated into a number of sects based on two schools: Sunni and Shiite. It is an irony of fate that the followers of these schools hate each other more than followers of other religions.

Gurdjieff's comments on religions

In Beelzebub's Tales there are many critical comments about the five main religions that originated from the teachings of 'messengers', viz. Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Lamaism. Gurdjieff is not concerned about theological doctrines, arguments or the historical developments of these systems. He concentrates on the beginning of these religions that were originated by Sacred Individuals, on distortions of

^a From the early medieval period of Christianity there have survived approximately 5000 copies of the Gospel, but the earliest is from about 350 AD.

^b In the United States there are registered approximately 20,000 religious sects.

their teachings by their followers, and on changes of interpretation of certain events in the lives of the 'messengers' with the passage of time. Gurdjieff often emphasises the similarities and cohesion of all religions that were established by Sacred Individuals.

"In general you must know that all the great genuine religions which have existed down to the present time, created, as history itself testifies, by men of equal attainment in regard to the perfecting of their Pure Reason, are always based on the same truths. The difference in those religions is only in the definite regulations they lay down for the observance of certain details and of what are called rituals; and this difference is the result of the deliberate adoption by the great founders of these regulations, which suited the degree of mental perfection of the people of the given period. At the root of every new doctrine upon which religions are founded, dogmas are always to be found, which have been taken from earlier religions and which had already been well fixed in the life of the people."¹²²

Buddhism^a

Gurdjieff stated that in India, in ancient times, there came into being beliefs that were more maleficent than in any other part of the world as a result of the activities of hasnamussian individuals. Saint Buddha was given the task of improving the situation. He had a very difficult mission to fulfil because he realised that in order to succeed he had to work on the improvement of man's reason, which was inspired at those times mainly by external stimuli. In spite of the problems facing him, Buddha decided to work on man's reason and to inform people about certain objective truths. At the beginning he was teaching purely his initiated followers, and explained the origins of the organ kundabuffer, and the consequences of its implantation. Next he explained that the removal of the organ had not improved the situation because in the meantime a certain predisposition, resulting from the functioning of kundabuffer, had crystallised in people's minds. This predisposition was passed by heredity to succeeding generations and consequently many properties of the organ kundabuffer became firmly rooted in human beings. Buddha warned that the teachings of Sacred Individuals who had been sent to Earth before him, had become distorted after their death, as a result of 'wiseacring' of their followers. He gave people sufficient instruction for the future on how they must work towards freeing themselves from the consequences of the organ kundabuffer.¹²³ Because the teaching of Buddha was very effective, visible improvement could be observed in his followers and the effects of kundabuffer began slowly to disappear. However after his death, in spite of his warnings, as a result of 'wiseacring' and individual interpretation, his teaching in the third or fourth generation of his disciples had been changed so much that it had very little in common with the original message of Buddha.¹²⁴

^a Buddhism and Lamaism are different from the other three monotheistic religions. Buddhists do not believe in the Absolute God demanding obedience and adoration, they do not believe in a Cosmic Power controlling everything in the Universe, who punishes and rewards people. Buddhism is based on discovering our true self and searching for Enlightenment rather than Revelation. It shows people how they should live and how to accept human suffering. It proclaims true equality of people and humanitarianism.

Many times Gurdjieff had stated that 'wiseacring' is deeply rooted in human nature, and although it is basically an insignificant characteristic, it causes significant alteration of the work of Sacred Individuals, which would have been greatly beneficial to the human race. From the life of Buddha he gives examples of the changes that eroded his teachings. Buddha taught that "One of the best means of rendering ineffective the predisposition present in your nature of the crystallisation of the consequences of the properties of the organ Kundabuffer is 'intentional suffering'; and the greatest intentional suffering can be obtained in your presence if you compel yourselves to be able to endure the 'displeasing manifestation of others towards yourself.'"¹²⁵ As a result of 'wiseacring' of the second or third generation of Buddha's disciples, his teaching was presented in such a way that 'intentional suffering' could only be experienced in solitude. This was obviously contrary to Buddha's intentions who had stressed that it was necessary to work on our spiritual development and on perfecting ourselves while living among people. As a result of this inverted interpretation many people withdrew from life and chose to live as a recluse, or founded monasteries with like-minded followers of this type of suffering. This interpretation of intentional suffering was adopted by other religions which likewise established secluded monastic places for selected members of their Churches. Gurdjieff was angry with people who were unable to understand such a simple idea as 'intentional suffering'.

Another false notion that arose from the teaching of Buddha concerned the development of a sacred prana or soul. Thus, as a result of the work on self-development, it had been explained that everybody could receive this most sacred particle in the Universe - holy prana. People who have already obtained this particle must continue their work to achieve the required level of Objective Reason. If the work is abandoned, then prana will be subjected to eternal suffering and will move from one body to another. This precise explanation of Buddha was very well understood by his closest disciples, and many of them worked to obtain prana and Objective Reason. However as a result of 'wiseacring' of the second or third generation of his followers, the Buddhists arrived at the conclusion that prana was present in everybody from the moment of birth. As a consequence of this distortion, people assumed that they did not have to work on their development and on fulfilling their sacred duties to receive prana, because they already possessed it¹²⁶.

Judaism

Judaism is based on the teachings of Saint Moses, who was also a 'messenger' from above. His accomplishments are very significant and he left teachings and many rules to direct people in their everyday lives. If all his guidelines were to be adopted and applied, the consequences of the organ kundabuffer would gradually disappear, as well as the predisposition to acquire other deleterious characteristics. However, exactly the same happened as with Buddhism; after the death of Moses, his followers inserted the entire fantastic doctrine that had originated from the Zoroastrian religion, into his teaching.¹²⁷

Gurdjieff also gives his explanation why the followers of Moses had been dispersed over the whole planet, and what the causes of anti-Semitism were. He maintains that this predicament resulted from the specific

characteristic of the organ kundabuffer called 'envy'. In ancient times Jews had great abilities to organise their country well and to prosper. This caused envy in members of other ethnic communities. This envy became so strongly rooted in people's mentality that even the loss of their country and the lapse of two thousand years has not managed to change their attitude to the sons of Israel.¹²⁸ However Gurdjieff's explanation of the origin of anti-Semitism is very simplistic. In people of lower social strata envy plays an important role, but this does not explain the causes of anti-Semitism in middle and upper classes.

Christianity

The third religion is based on the teachings of a 'messenger from above' Jesus Christ. Gurdjieff stated that the founders of the Christian religion based it on the doctrine of Judaism and changed only the external presentation, to adapt it to the mental development and cultural level of the contemporary population. This religion has many tenets concerning the soul and the body, including guidelines for a happy and peaceful existence. These tenets were so wise that they could be adapted to the needs of future generations of followers, even of very distant epochs. Gurdjieff stated that "...if only the teaching of the Divine Jesus Christ had been fully respected in its original form, the religion founded upon it with such unprecedented wisdom would not only be the best of all existing religions, but even of all religions that might arise and exist in the future".¹²⁹

He explained that the teaching of Jesus Christ began to spread widely; now about one third of the world population are Christian. However, the followers of this great teaching are divided into many sects due to unimportant external details. Disregarding the original teaching, elements from other existing religions were added for purely selfish or political reasons. Not only had these additions nothing in common with the teaching of Jesus Christ, but sometimes were even contradicting it. In addition they were supplemented by many doctrines of Moses that became, even in those times, completely distorted. Much later, in the Middle Ages, so-called Fathers of the Church added fantastic doctrines that had been invented many centuries before in Babylon, including those about Paradise and Hell¹³⁰.

There is no doubt that Gurdjieff valued Jesus Christ's teachings as the most important of all. He believed that if people were to obey Christ's commandments, there would be no need for any other laws.^a The most important commandment is 'love thy neighbour'. It is the pillar of Christ's teaching, and all other commandments arise from this commandment. Gurdjieff very bitterly comments on the development of the Christian doctrine: "So at present time, in place of the teaching of the divine teacher Jesus Christ, which

^a A similar idea had been developed in the 19 c. by Leo Tolstoy in his essays on civil disobedience, pacifism and patriotism published in the book "Writings on Civil Disobedience and Non-violence", New Society Publishers, 1987.

revealed the power of the All Lovingness and All-Forgiveness of our Creator suffering for beings, a teaching now exists that our Creator torments the souls of His followers".¹³¹

Islam

The fourth religion that arose a few centuries after Christianity is based on the teachings of Saint Muhammad. According to Gurdjieff Islam, with the exception of the tradition of polygamy, does not contain anything that could not be found in the teachings of Judaism and Christianity¹³². Islam was introduced much later than Christianity and was intentionally limited by its originators, who wanted to adapt it to the then contemporary conditions and mentality of its followers. This approach to Islam was instigated by the visible decline of Christianity in those times and the disappearance, in ordinary people, of the capacity for 'contemplation' that was needed to gain understanding of the truths contained in the core of the religious teachings. Therefore, the founders of Islam decided to introduce simple and unambiguous commandments and customs that people would find easy to follow. Owing to this approach, the followers of Islam could pass through life satisfactorily even without in-depth understanding of religious doctrines.¹³³

At the beginning, Islam was easily accepted and spread extensively, bringing hope of reconciliation and coexistence between the followers of different religions. This would have been of great benefit had the leaders of Islam not started, as Gurdjieff called it, 'wiseacring' and adding many new theories to the original doctrines. On the one hand the theories of Babylonian dualists had been appended, and on the other, the 'Fathers of the Church' had invented many fantastic ideas about Paradise.¹³⁴

In his comments about the development of religions Gurdjieff omitted on purpose any other factors that had contributed and influenced the shaping of religious ideas such as: culture, history, customs, as well as economic and political factors. The influence of these factors depended on the epoch, and on the prevailing mentality of the population, their level of education and consciousness, and had different effects on the described religions. Gurdjieff mainly concentrated on the common factors that affected the development of all religions, independent of place and period of their origins. This common factor includes the psyche of man that has not changed for thousands of years. We know from the history of the Christian Church, that there were only a few outstanding 'Fathers of the Church', such as Saint Augustine or Thomas Aquinas who had exercised a dominating influence on the development of Christian theology. The influence of a given epoch became visible in the application and interpretation of these doctrines. Many defining factors helped the creation of new Churches, but in general, the main contributing force was a new doctrine as proposed by an outstanding theologian such as Luther, Calvin, etc. Islam not being under such strong centralised rule as the Catholic Church, had a very large number of important imams, who started new sects. Analysing the history of the religions one could conclude that mainly 'Fathers of Churches' had been responsible for the changes of the original teachings of the 'messengers' from above.

Lamaism (Tibetan Buddhism)

The fifth religion has been based on the teaching of Saint Lama, who was also a 'messenger' from our Creator. When Lama began his work, he noticed that many guidelines introduced by Buddha were still relevant and only small adjustments were needed to help the people with their spiritual development. Many followers of Buddha adopted Lama's teaching and considered them more suitable for the prevailing contemporary conditions. Due to the geographical isolation, Lamaism spread only locally; however this isolation ensured that the followers were not subjected to the influence of various foreign ideas. Although, again, a part of Lama's teaching had been changed by his disciples, many tenets remained in their original form. The teachings were very effective and were absorbed by his followers, as a part of their essence, and were applied in daily life. The inhabitants of Tibet were organised in groups based on the level of understanding of the Lama's teaching, and on their needs of working on spiritual self-development. A significant fraction of them managed to free themselves from the consequences of the organ kundabuffer, and many were on the way to attain this objective.¹³⁵

Gurdjieff described that in Tibet the main role of transmitting the teaching of Lama had been fulfilled by a 'group of seven' consisting of nearly perfected beings¹³⁶. This 'group of seven' had existed already in the times of Buddha, and when lama arrived they became his followers. Lama introduced a rule that the secret directives concerning 'the group of seven' be transmitted from one generation to the next exclusively by their leader. Only the leader knew all of Lama's instructions and at the right time he passed them onto the member of the group who had attained the highest level of perfection of his Reason. Gurdjieff stated that during the British invasion of Tibet a terrible disaster occurred. A leader of the 'group of seven' had been killed by a stray bullet before he managed to pass the secret information to his successor. The members of the group tried to communicate with their leader using a sacred process called 'almznoshinoo', to obtain this secret information.¹³⁷

'Almznoshinoo' is a process that enables living people to communicate with a dead person. During this process, a person whose kerdjan body is fully developed and has reached a certain level of Objective Reason can bring about the 'materialisation' of the 'kerdjan body' of a person whose physical body has ceased to exist, up to such a density that it is able to regain, for a limited time, the possibility of existing as its physical body, and therefore makes it possible to communicate with this person. The materialised kerdjan can exist in this form for up to one year and can function as a physical body. Special preparations before the death of this person must have been made to enable this process. During this preparation a certain amount of blood is removed from the person's body and is infused with the blood of persons who will be communicating with the deceased individual. Gurdjieff described that the priests had attempted to apply this process after the death of their leader without making the necessary preparations, and their activities had caused a terrible explosion and resulted in the death of all members of the 'group of seven'¹³⁸.

Interpretation of some events from the life of Christ

As an example of the lack of understanding of certain facts in the New Testament, Gurdjieff presents a new interpretation of events during the Last Supper. His version of these events is completely different from the officially accepted interpretation.

Gurdjieff explained that to fulfil his mission, Jesus Christ selected twelve apostles who had been prepared by him to continue his work. However, during this preparation work, before he managed to fulfil all the tasks and to pass all the important information and instructions for the future to his apostles, he learned that he would soon be arrested. Therefore he decided, together with the apostles to do the necessary preparation for this sacrament 'almznoshinoo', that would enable them future communication with Jesus. When they started these preparations, they found out that they had been surrounded by guards, and Jesus could be seized at any time. Then Judas decided that he would go and try to do everything possible to delay the arrest, so the remaining apostles would be able to complete the process. After a brief conversation with Christ Judas left the meeting, and owing to him the holy sacrament could be completed. Gurdjieff said that in the Gospel are many exact words and sentences spoken by Christ and the apostles. The problem arises when people try to interpret these words literally, without cognition of their hidden meaning, because nowadays people do not understand that in those times ideas and truths were transmitted in allegorical forms. Since the followers have not understood Christ's allegories, therefore they had to invent many senseless explanations that have survived till the present time.¹³⁹

Gurdjieff wrote that the way Judas has been described in the Gospel could be interpreted as if somebody wanted to debase the importance of Christ and the usefulness of his work^a. Christ was presented as a naïve individual, unable to detect a deceitful person amongst the apostles. In spite of that, he had known Judas for a long time, and was very close to him. Thus it does not make sense that he was unable to detect that his

^a Judas was mentioned in the Gospel of Saint Mark, but he was fully branded, and the role of the Jews was exposed in the Gospel of Saint John that had been written much later, when the political climate had changed. This Gospel paints a very black picture of Judas, who was the treasurer of the whole group, and therefore he must have been a very reliable and trustworthy person, because he knew about the group's expenditure and operations. However, the Gospel of St. John (12:6) presents him this way: " This he said (Judas), not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bad, and bare what was put there in." So he is presented as an ordinary thief, unknown to anybody until the end. It is interesting to mention that Paul, who lived at the time of Christ's death and who had intimate knowledge of the Christians, never mentioned Judas in his writings. It looks as if there had been a hidden purpose in presenting Judas in such a way. Perhaps, already in those times a theory was known, later developed by Freud, that to unite the faithful an object of hatred was needed.

trustful follower could be a traitor, who would sell him for 30 worthless pieces of silver. Recently, new theories about the role of Judas have been presented, that come much closer to Gurdjieff's interpretation.^a

Gurdjieff comments about the Resurrection in this way:

"... they (Fathers of the Church) inserted all sorts of 'absurdities' in most of the notes and descriptions set down by the witnesses of this sacred process for transmission to future generations. For example, in addition to the incontestable information that Jesus Christ had been crucified on a cross, and that after the crucifixion he was buried, they demonstrated just as convincingly that after his crucifixion and burial Jesus Christ was resurrected and continued to exist among them and to teach this and that—and only afterwards did he raise himself with his planetary body to Heaven.

"As a result of this kind of wiseacring of theirs—criminal, in the objective sense—all true faith in the divine teaching of salvation of the All-Loving Jesus Christ, uniquely feasible for them, was totally destroyed in the beings of subsequent generations. "The absurdities that were written down gradually engendered in the presence of certain beings of later generations the impulse of doubt, not only about what I have just told you, but also concerning all the real information and accurate instructions and explanations of this Sacred Individual, intentionally actualized among them from Above."¹⁴⁰

Fast

To illustrate the transformations of religious beliefs and rituals with time, Gurdjieff describes the changes to the observance of Christian fasting as follows:

" 'Of all the useful customs introduced by the great founders of the Christian religion into the life of its followers for the preservation of health and the maintenance of the morality necessary for a happy life, nothing now remains except the custom of periodic fasting, that is, of abstaining at certain times of the year from the consumption of particular edible products.

'And even this last surviving good custom is either disappearing completely from the ordinary life of the followers of this religion, or is undergoing such changes year by year that for those who "fast" no shock is obtained from its observance, although it was just for that shock that this fast was established. 'The changes now taking place in this custom of fasting are very characteristic and provide an excellent example of how all the good Christian customs have little by little undergone change, until they have finally ceased to exist.

" 'An excellent illustration of this is the manner in which this fast is observed at the present day by those called "Russian Orthodox Christians " " 'These Russian Orthodox Christians took their religion in its

^a The popular image of Judas as a traitor is challenged by William Klassen, professor in L'Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem. In his book "Judas traitor or a friend of Jesus?" he argues that the translation of a Greek word 'paradidomi' used by St. Paul (in his First Letter to the Corinthians 11: 23-24) is incorrect. This word had been translated as 'betrayed', although the other meanings are 'arrested' or 'handed over'.

entirety from the Orthodox Greeks, who passed on to them, along with other Christian customs, this same custom of "fasting. "" 'Among the millions of these Russian Orthodox Christians the majority still continue to fast, as is said, "scrupulously," according to the "Orthodox code" now existing there. " 'But how they actually perform this ritual of fasting, this can only be described by the apt saying of our dear Mullah Nasr Eddin : " ' "What does it matter if I sing like a donkey as long as they call me a nightingale?"

" 'It is just the same with the fasting of these Russian Orthodox Christians as long as they are called Christians and moreover Orthodox—what does it matter that they receive no "shock" whatever from the fast? " 'As I have said, these Russian Orthodox Christians of the present time still observe very strictly all the seasons and days of fast indicated in their code... 'During these Christian fasts, which came from the Orthodox Greeks, they all eat the flesh offish. 'It is not considered a "sin" for them to eat the flesh of fish, and they eat it heartily as a "fast dish. " " 'I personally find only one thing incomprehensible— where did these Russian "sorry Orthodox" get the idea that during the Christian fasts, especially during Lent, they may eat the flesh of fish? " 'I find this incomprehensible because those Orthodox Christians from whom they took their religion, that is, the Greeks, have never eaten and do not now eat the flesh of fish during fasts. " 'Even today the Greeks eat fish during Lent only on one day, when in accordance with the code of the Orthodox Church they celebrate the memory of a day in the life of the divine Jesus Christ " 'A fast permitting the consumption of the flesh offish not only gives no shock at all to those who are fasting, but is even directly contrary to what the divine Jesus Christ intended and taught, and contrary to the purpose of the great creators of the Christian religion in establishing this custom.¹⁴¹

Chapter 7

Ways of man's development

Why should man work on his development? Is it necessary? What are the possible methods of self-development? We could ask many more similar questions, but it is the individual concerned who must find the answers himself. Gurdjieff's point of view was discussed in Chapter 3 - Terror of the situation. It may be worth repeating the main arguments. Man's life is an endless series of calamities. The worst causes of our suffering include wars, revolutions and famines. Although the standard of living in the West is much higher than it was a hundred years ago, it is still very low in many other countries in the world and famines are still common in Africa. Our Euro-American civilisation is dominated by increasing personal problems such as family breakdown, stress at work and at home, alcohol and drug addiction, juvenile delinquency and many more social problems. In spite of many attempts by scientists, politicians and religious leaders to improve

the situation, there is no visible progress especially in the personal domain. The second reason, according to Gurdjieff, why man should work on his development is the question of immortality and the need to develop a soul. He stated that only fully conscious people, possessing Objective Reason, could achieve immortality; the rest will fulfil the need of Nature and will disappear without a trace^a.

State of mankind

Describing the present state of mankind, Gurdjieff said that man's evolution has been completed. It has resulted in the full biological development of man, but his mental development has stopped at a certain level determined by Nature, and consequently man's incredible mental capacity has remained underdeveloped. Mankind, as well as the rest of organic life, exists on Earth to fulfil the needs of Nature and therefore is formed in such a way that will meet its purpose. Present man, regardless of his level of mental development, is always serving Nature by simply living and dying. There is no need for further mental evolution of mankind because it is not needed by Nature. However, man's situation is not hopeless and Gurdjieff summarised it as follows: Man is an unconscious slave serving to fulfil the cosmic purpose that is completely foreign to him, beyond his comprehension. Man does not occupy a privileged position in the Universe or even on Earth. He is treated by Great Nature as one of its components, the same way as animals. He can live in this unconscious state and will disappear forever like other biological organisms. However, Great Nature gave him the possibility to be more than a blind tool serving the cosmic purpose by giving him the chance to work on self development for the benefit of his own egoistic individuality. This chance is given to man, because liberated people with Objective Reason are necessary for serving cosmic laws¹⁴².

Nicoll, in his commentaries on Gurdjieff's teachings, wrote: "And, from the standpoint of conscious humanity- that is, fully developed men who have reached the level of the divine Intelligence of the Sun and its laws - we are nothing but monkeys and of really no importance. We are nothing but an experiment in self-evolution"¹⁴³. Man has within himself a potential for individual evolution. This evolution concerns the mental and psychological development of man. However this development is not automatic, driven by external forces, but it is the development that exclusively depends on the will and work of an individual man. It concentrates on the development of consciousness, reason and other potentials that could not come into being without the participation of his strong driving force.

For a good many years Gurdjieff was a 'voice in the wilderness', who preached about the necessity of development of consciousness. In the second half of the 20th century more people began to develop similar ideas independently. For example Teilhard de Chardin, a well known catholic scientist and thinker wrote that "Evolution is an ascent towards consciousness"; Aurobindo, one of the greatest Indian philosophers said that " A change of consciousness is the major fact of the next evolutionary transformation"¹⁴⁴. However

^a See Chapter 8 - Cosmology.

only the development of transpersonal psychology^a in the 1960s caused completely radical changes in our understanding and attitude to the development of man's consciousness, although still outside the main academic stream. And, for example, Elgin wrote that there exists an evolutionary crisis in the world because of " ...first, a lack of 'internal' evolution commensurate with our external/material evolution, second, a failure to recognise that 'internal' growth is central to human evolutionary process. Our present civilisation crisis emerges, in part, out of a gross disparity between the relatively underdeveloped internal faculties of man and the extremely powerful external technologies at our disposal. We must right the imbalance of our present era by fostering a degree of interior human growth and maturation that is at least commensurate with the enormous exterior technological growth that has occurred in the last several hundred years"¹⁴⁵.

Progress

Many people are convinced that there is no need for individual development because humanity is continuously advancing. Our conviction is based mainly on visible technical and scientific developments and associated social and economic improvements. These improvements provide an average person with material goods necessary for a tolerable life style and have increased his leisure time. However, as a result of this progress society has not become happier and more harmonious. What we observe is quite the opposite. Society is becoming more greedy, selfish and xenophobic. The possession of material goods gives only temporary satisfaction and the fact that someone else has a better house, more wealth, a higher social position could be a cause of deep dissatisfaction with life. However, it is difficult to detect any progress in understanding the psychological functioning of man. Most people are still unable to solve their personal and social problems, resulting in increasing stress and illness. Gurdjieff is very critical of so called 'progress' and he said to his students:

" It is strange how you so easily believe in this word progress. It is as if this word hypnotised you, so that you cannot see the truth. Man does not progress. There is no progress whatever. Everything is just the same as it was thousands, and tens thousands, of years ago. The outward form changes. The essence does not change. Man remains just the same. 'Civilised' and 'cultured' people live with exactly the same interests as the most ignorant savages. Modern Civilization is based on violence and slavery and fine words. But all these fine words about 'progress' and 'civilisation' are merely words. If Man is the same, life is the same"¹⁴⁶.

If we believe in progress could we say that we are governed by better and wiser men? In reality it is quite the opposite. Self-centred people, having a low level of consciousness and blinded by power, come to command. Could we honestly say that in our everyday life we are able to witness noble-mindedness, justice and culture, winning over vulgarity and stupidity? As in ancient Rome the mob demanded games and wine, so nowadays the main entertainment for the masses are football matches and drinking. If we study the works

^a See Chapter 1, section: Psychological systems in the Western tradition

of Plato or Shakespeare's plays, we will find that the psychological problems of modern man are exactly the same as during the times of these writers.

Gurdjieff believed that progress, in the true meaning of this word, can only result from the conscious effort of individual human beings, striving to achieve a higher state of development. There is no evidence of noticeable psychological advancement. What looks like progress or evolution is, in reality, a partial modification of human behaviour as a result of social pressures, religious teachings and the development of science and technology. Gurdjieff maintained that the changes of society that could be identified as 'progress' are unstable because they could easily be modified in the future, or reversed, for example by limiting personal freedom. Such regress could be observed in the last century in the Stalinist Soviet Union or Hitler's Germany.

Higher levels of man's development

Besides the three types of men already discussed who are directed by the moving and instinctive centre, emotional centre and intellectual centre, Gurdjieff introduces higher levels of man's development: man of type four, five, six and seven. As it was described in Chapter 1, the life of man of type one, two and three is shaped by external forces, but higher levels of man's development depend solely on man's work on himself.

Type One, Two and Three Man^a

People belonging to the first three types perceive reality in a different way according to their dominant centre. Their life is characterised by automatic behaviour, struggle, force, stress and lack of understanding. Each centre has a different understanding and uses a different 'language', therefore people of the first three types are unable to understand each other, even if they use the same well known words, because interpretation of the meaning of these words is different. Gurdjieff described this situation by saying that people belong to a circle of confused languages from the tower of Babel. He is not talking about languages describing the material world, but about the languages of the psychological and spiritual world. People belonging to these three types can function very effectively in society, often held in high esteem by people similar to themselves, because their level of functioning is well adapted to their environment and the predominating situations. However if the condition of their lives changed, e.g. as a result of a war, revolution, or personal misfortunes, such people would lose their balance and adjust to the new environment with difficulties. This feature is mainly responsible for the lack of social and political progress in society. People are normally afraid of change because it means a need for adjustment to new conditions, a need to understand a new situation, and only a few people are capable of achieving it.

Type Four Man

^a Three basic types were discussed in Chapter 1.

The functioning of man Type Four is governed by his determination to work on himself towards self-development. His whole life is focussed on these tasks. Power of the dominating centre becomes gradually reduced and the work of all other centres becomes more balanced. A process of co-operation between each centre in more harmonious ways is taking place. Man of this type begins to absorb real knowledge, he commences to free himself from subjective elements. He is able to look critically at himself, to recognise the different parts of his personality and his internal contradictions. He understands a lot about his being, his life, and this helps him to understand others and not to judge them too severely.

People belonging to this group are able to understand each other, and try to avoid the use of force and violence in human relations. Nicoll wrote that if on Earth, all people with the exception of one person of Type Four disappeared, he should be able to pass enough knowledge to the offspring of a new generation to guarantee their normal functioning¹⁴⁷. The development of man of Type Four is not permanently secure, and he could regress to the lower level if he stopped working on himself.

Type Five Man

Man of Type Five has attained internal unity by developing one, permanent and unchanging 'I'. His knowledge is 'whole' and undivided and belongs to his one 'I'. Man on this level is completely different from ordinary people because he possesses profound knowledge and his functioning is based on true understanding. He has achieved a high level of Objective Reason. People on this and higher levels understand each other and never use force. They understand esoteric knowledge and transmit it in the form of myth, legends, sacred writings, customs and rites. They exert a large influence on the spiritual development of people on lower levels. There is no danger of them regressing to a lower level.

Types Six and Seven Men

Type Seven has attained the highest possible level of development for man and has acquired all the special qualities that man could ever possess such as free will, full consciousness, permanent 'I' and distinctive individuality. He has achieved the highest Objective Reason on a divine-like level. He has developed a soul and in this way secured immortality. Man of this type is at the apex of the pyramid of development of humanity. Attainment of this level should be the ultimate aim of man.

Type Six Man possesses the same attributes as Type Seven Man, but some of his qualities are not yet permanent.

Divisions into seven types

Classification of man into seven types helps to explain many problems that are normally difficult to understand. This grouping makes us aware of how deep are the differences between people who look and behave alike, have similar backgrounds, education, culture and customs. However people belonging to

different types are very dissimilar. They possess various levels of consciousness, different kind of knowledge, different understanding and beings^a.

To reiterate, knowledge of man Type One is based on copying other people's knowledge and has been accepted by his instincts, knowledge of man Type Two is classified into his likes or dislikes, and into his immediate benefits and pleasures. Type Three Man possesses encyclopaedic, bookish knowledge based on words and literal understanding. Type Four Man possesses knowledge of the three lower types man, but has slowly freed himself from subjective elements. Type Five Man's knowledge is whole and complete, close to objective knowledge. Knowledge of Man Type Six and Seven is at the pinnacle of what man could ever possess, it is fully objective, and includes understanding of the principles of existence of human kind; there is however a danger that it might be lost by Type Six Man.

People belonging to different types have different levels of being. As we know, being of Type One Man is based on his instincts and physical sensations, Type Two on emotions and psychological sensations, and Type Three on rational logical reasoning. Being of people of Type Four to Seven is based on different degrees of objective knowledge and understanding of the world's laws. This is completely different than being of the first three types. The different levels of being are responsible for the lack of mutual understanding and communication between the various types of people. For example, people Type One, Two and Three would not be able to understand each other's problems, and would not trust each other. Only people at higher levels of being are able to comprehend people on their own and on lower levels.

This division into seven types could be applied to other areas of man's activities. One could say that, for example, there exists art of type one - imitating and copying; type two - sentimental and sensuous; type three - intellectual and discovering. Continuing this classification we could infer that there must exist art of type four, five etc. but we have not become aware of it because art at this level could only have been created and comprehended by people of Type Four, Five, etc. We could only assume that art of the higher types transmits esoteric knowledge and evokes feelings at higher levels. Perhaps magnificent cathedrals built in Europe in the 11-13th century by unknown builders could represent these categories. We can only suspect the hidden message of these works because people of lower types are unable to recognise art of higher types even if they see it.

Religions could also be divided in a similar way. Type one religion is based on ceremonies and rituals that could even be barbarian. The rituals of Mayas and Aztecs involving human sacrifice are examples of extreme religions of this type. Religions of type two are based on emotions, love and adoration of God. Religions of type three have intellectual character. They are religions of proofs, interpretations and meditations. There probably exist religions of higher types containing so-called esoteric teachings. It is possible that esoteric sects such as Sufi might belong to these higher types. Unfortunately we do not know anything about higher types of religions, but they must meet the needs of higher types of man. In principle,

^a See chapter 1.

each religion consists of elements corresponding to various types, and therefore can be accepted by different types of people. They would only selectively choose certain elements corresponding to their types.

Three ways of man's development

To each of the first three types of man correspond three traditional ways of development that could lead to him achieving full control over himself. These are known as the way of fakir, monk and yogi.

The way of the fakir. A fakir^a works on the development of his will power by trying to control his physical body. To achieve this he submits his body to various ordeals and tortures. Some fakirs stand on one leg or balance on their hands, practising these postures for days, months or even years. Others expose themselves to sun, snow or rain, others submit themselves to the ordeal of fire. In this way, by overcoming pain and physical tiredness, they develop their strength of willpower. The fakir's way does not require much knowledge. Normally the disciples stand next to the master and learn by observation and imitation. Often someone becomes a fakir not because he has a strong need for self-development or strong religious feelings, but by chance. In some Eastern countries there is a custom of promising to give a child born after some important good event in the family to a fakir. Staying all the time with the fakir, the child learns to imitate him and at the end becomes a fakir himself.

Gurdjieff maintained that the method of the fakir gives only limited results, because the emotional and intellectual centres of man remain underdeveloped. If a fakir attains willpower, he has to develop two other centres to be able to apply it. To achieve this, he would have to use the help of a very good master. By gaining control over his body the fakir does not acquire the ability to understand. Possessing willpower without understanding is completely useless if not pernicious¹⁴⁸.

The way of the monk. This is a way of deep faith, a way of religious feelings and sacrifices. Only a man, able to experience these kinds of feelings and with a strong religious imagination, will be able to become a monk in the full sense of the word. The way of the monk is also long and difficult. Over many years a monk has to struggle with himself, concentrating on controlling his feelings. He has to learn to subordinate all his feelings to one main feeling - faith. As a result of his work he is usually able to fully control his feelings, but his body and intellect remain underdeveloped. To achieve full development he would have to undertake new work that would require new sacrifices.¹⁴⁹

The way of the yogi. This is the way of knowledge, the way of the mind. A yogi can attain control over himself by developing his mind, gaining knowledge and directing his thoughts. This way includes groups of Inana-yogi that work on achieving knowledge and a new method of thinking, and Raja-yogi working on the development of the being and consciousness. However the yogi's body and feelings are not developed by

^a In colloquial language the word 'fakir' is used by the Europeans to describe street entertainers, magicians or even yogis.

these methods, therefore the yogi, similar to the fakir and the monk, is not able to utilise what he has attained for himself for the benefit of other people.

The described three ways have a common feature. They all demand what is most difficult for man - to change his life completely and to reject worldly possessions. Such a person has to leave his home, his family and friends, give up pleasures, break his ties and habits, abandon his present style of life. He must go to a desert, monastery or school. From the first day he has to renounce the world because only then has he any hope of achieving his ultimate goal. After attaining control over themselves, the fakir, monk and yogi still have substantial shortcomings. They are not able to apply their gained mastery because they do not control their other functions. Because they live far away from human problems, their achievements are useful only for themselves, not for society.

The discussed ways must not be identified with the common names of 'fakir', 'monk' and 'yogi' as applied in various religions. The way of the fakir, monk or yogi is not connected with any religion, but is related to the work on one of the centres. And so a monk practising Zen meditation, is following the way of the yogi although he is called a monk, and those who practise Bhakti-yoga, which is based on incantations in ecstasy, follow the way of the monk.

The Fourth Way

Gurdjieff rejected the above methods which lead to one-sided development and proposed a new Fourth Way. The Fourth Way is based on simultaneous and balanced development of the three centres of functioning, but it is not a combination of the three described methods. The Fourth Way is a way of individual development. This way has no well defined unequivocal form, as in the case of the fakir, monk and yogi. First of all, this way must be discovered personally by each candidate. However, the beginning of this way is much easier than the beginning of the other three ways. One can follow the Fourth Way while leading a normal life, working professionally and keeping contact with friends and the outside world, without any sacrifices and shocks as in the case of the other ways. As a matter of fact it is a necessary condition of working on this way to live with people, to be a part of society. Normal conditions of life, with the usual problems and struggles, are the optimum conditions to begin the work because they are natural and familiar to man. Changing the environment i.e. living a secluded life, would be detrimental because the work on self-development would not affect all aspects of man's being. Although this way does not require renouncing the world, it does not mean that it is easier than the other ways. In a certain sense it is the most difficult way because when we have undergone internal changes this will affect our behaviour and interaction with people, who will not be able to understand the changes that are taking place in us.

The results of the work on the Fourth Way are proportional to the understanding of its methods and to the consciousness of the work. Blind faith in the methods is not needed, and is even harmful. Uncritical belief would only hamper progress. Man has to experience himself and convince himself about the efficacy of this way. Ouspensky said: "Then the Fourth Way differs from the other ways in that the principal demand made upon man is the demand for understanding. A man must do nothing that he does not understand, except as an experiment under the supervision and direction of his teacher. The more a man understands what he is doing, the greater will be the results of his efforts. This is a fundamental principle of the Fourth Way"¹⁵⁰.

In order to follow the Fourth Way we have to work simultaneously in three centres. While we exercise the body we should work on the emotion and mind, when practising the mind we also train the body and emotions; and when we work on the emotions we exercise the mind and body. For example, to one of the most popular exercises belong the group 'movements', consisting of the movements of parts of the body to the rhythm of music. This exercise is not only for the body, but predominantly for the mind because it requires total concentration to follow very complicated movements of various parts of the body, synchronising with the movements of other members of the group. Mastering this exercise gives a pleasant sensation of smoothness and control over our own body, therefore also develops the emotional centre.

When following the Fourth Way it is most important that each person works individually on what is felt to be necessary for him, and not on what is arranged for him by the school programme. Thus superfluous elements are rejected that might have been traditionally preserved by other methods. Therefore a man with highly developed willpower would be able to use it because he has attained, at the same time, sufficient development and control of his body, emotions and intellectual functions. Gurdjieff called this way the way of a 'sly' man, because this smart man has learnt secrets not known to the fakir, monk and the yogi. How he has done it, is his secret.

Of the four men, the fakir acts in the most primitive manner. He knows very little and understands even less. The monk knows what he wants to achieve a little better. He is guided by religious feelings. He knows that he strives to achieve salvation. He trusts his teacher that his effort and sacrifices will be rewarded by God. The yogi knows much more. He knows what he wants and why he wants it. He knows how to achieve it. He knows that by concentration and mental exercises he can attain what he is looking for. To achieve a certain goal, a yogi has to spend one day on exercises, while the monk needs a week to overcome emotional stress, and the fakir needs a month to strengthen his will by applying physical suffering¹⁵¹. Through practising asceticism, mortifying the body, continuously praying etc. people can achieve a higher level of consciousness^a and being, but it is not an intelligent way. On the Fourth Way man is fully aware of his

^a Christina and Stanislav Grof wrote that in such religions as Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam there are many examples of attaining a higher level of consciousness as a result of self-inflicting suffering and exercises, that could be classified as the way of the fakir, monk and the yogi. (C. Grof, S.; Grof, "The Stormy Search for the Self", Thorsons, London, 1995).

weaknesses as a result of self-observation, and therefore he is able to direct and adjust his work to his needs. On this way the understanding of our own needs is more complete and more precise than on the other ways. It is worth mentioning that the Fourth Way can help an average person to develop his consciousness and change his life, while only outstanding individuals could achieve Enlightenment by following the other ways.

Directions of man's development

Each person has the choice of following a way of self-development that is based on the development of consciousness that could be called 'a way of individual evolution'. Consciousness is an essential element of our existence, it is the foundation of our knowledge, the basis of our experience, therefore it is the most important phenomenon in the life and development of man. Consciousness is often described by modern science as an automatic product of our brain, as a result of functioning of neurones. It is widely assumed that from the moment we wake up, we are fully conscious of everything around us. However Gurdjieff does not agree with this popular belief. He maintained that man in the awake state is not fully conscious, because his attention is limited, his susceptibility to suggestions high, his responses automatic, and his 'I's so changeable that this state reminds us more of a hypnotic trance than the state of full consciousness.^a

Gurdjieff explained that the main purpose of man's development should be attainment of a higher state of consciousness - self-consciousness and objective consciousness. He maintained that man, even at the present state of development could easily achieve a state of self-consciousness. However he is not able to reach it because he is not even aware that this kind of consciousness exists at all¹⁵². These type of people Gurdjieff called 'being asleep'. Because they do not realise the true situation, they have a very small chance of waking up. In one of his lectures Gurdjieff said: "Man's possibilities are very great. You cannot conceive even a shadow of what man is capable of attaining. But nothing can be attained in sleep. In the consciousness of a sleeping man his illusion, his 'dreams' are mixed with reality. He lives in a subjective world and he can never escape from it. And this is the reason why he can never make use of all the powers he possesses and why he always lives in only a small part of himself"¹⁵³.

Man, who does not possess self-consciousness lives well below his possibilities. Therefore, the main aim of Gurdjieff's teaching, is to make people aware that there exist higher levels of consciousness and that they could attain them by applying special knowledge and exercises.

In Beelzebub's Tales Gurdjieff mentioned the fourth level - objective consciousness, which is at the apex of man's development. He believed that only this person who attains this level of consciousness can be called a 'real man', because he possesses, in a certain sense, 'divine' characteristics. Gurdjieff does not provide any information on how to achieve the highest level of consciousness, and therefore we have to assume that in

^a See Chapter 1.

the present phase of man's development this level is practically beyond the reach of an average person. History shows that it has been attained only by a few outstanding individuals.

Gurdjieff has not the slightest doubt that man should change because it is in his interest. The problem is that man is still not free and conscious enough to be able to choose the appropriate way of self-development.

Conditions necessary for man's development

Who has the potential to attain a higher level of consciousness? According to Gurdjieff not everybody has this chance. There are many reasons that make it impossible for man to reach this freedom. The causes of this situation do not originate in ourselves, nor are they predicted by cosmic laws, but they result from accidental conditions existing during our conception and during the period of formation of our mind. This means that the main causes depend on inherited values and education. Only people with specific features have a chance to achieve good results. One of the most important human characteristics is the feeling of responsibility for their own and other people's lives. Gurdjieff calls such a person an 'obyvatel' - a good citizen. Such a person will perform his daily work and duties with full awareness of what, why and how he is doing it. His actions are not necessarily of benefit to other people, but they would never harm others either. An 'obyvatel' understands life very well and has a balanced scale of values and the right outlook on life. People who belong to psychological, as Gurdjieff called them, 'tramps', who live by excitement, emotions, lead a kind of 'bohemian' life concentrating on their own pleasures, career and social achievements, without any feeling of duty and responsibility, do not have much chance of achieving this goal. In a certain sense these criteria are very unexpected because they eliminate a large part of society that is normally interested in new esoteric teachings. According to Nicoll, a person who does not believe that there exists consciousness higher than his own, one true and unchanging 'I', who is proud of his present position and existence, who believes that the Universe and life began accidentally, that there is no higher force above, and who joins the Fourth Way out of vanity and self-love, will not find fulfilment of his expectations on the Fourth Way.¹⁵⁴ These beliefs, often associated with the elite of society, limit the group of potential candidates, who could attain Objective Reason even further.

Gurdjieff listed the conditions to be fulfilled by people on the Fourth Way as follows:¹⁵⁵

- *The first striving: to have in ones ordinary being-existence everything satisfying and really necessary for the planetary body.* This means that man must take care of the material as well as psychological needs of his existence. Any abnormal conditions such as prolonged isolation, purposeful mortification, frequent fasting, self-inflicting physical and psychological suffering are very harmful for the development of man.
- *The second striving: to have a constant and unflagging instinctive need to perfect oneself in the sense of Being.* Man should feel a strong desire to develop, and should be supported by his strong willpower necessary for a lasting effort.

- *The third: the conscious striving to know ever more and more about the laws of world-creation and world-maintenance.* Man should be concerned not only with his own problems, but he should try to understand the laws applicable to humankind, Earth, nature and the Universe.
- *The fourth: the striving, from the beginning of one's existence, to pay as quickly as possible for one's arising and individuality, in order afterward to be free to lighten as much as possible the sorrow of our Common Father.* Man is obliged to compensate his family and society for the effort connected with his coming to the world, for his education. Therefore he must help his family and society in supporting a new generation. Only when he has paid his debt can he wholly devote himself to work on his own development.
- *And the fifth: the striving always to assist the most rapid perfecting of other beings, both those similar to oneself and those of other forms, up to the degree of the sacred 'Martfotai', that is, up to the degree of self-individuality.* After attaining a certain level of consciousness, man should help other people on lower levels of consciousness to work on their development.

Although the work on oneself is individual, nobody should work in isolation from others, but be part of a group. The main elements of work on the Fourth Way are:

- work on oneself
- work with other students
- work for a school^a

Work in a group is very important for self-development because a vital part of training includes interaction with other people. The group forms an accepting environment for a student, who is changing as a result of his work, while the external world does not understand the changes that are occurring in him. The group provides support during the moments of doubt in our own progress and during various set-backs. A very important element of man's development is his understanding of the necessity to work for others. Therefore he should, right from the beginning, work also for his school, so it can fulfil its objectives and function efficiently.

Methods of work on oneself

Principles of self-observation

The first and most important stage of work on self-development is discovering oneself. 'Know yourself' is the fundamental principle of many systems and schools connected with the development of man. One should not even think about development work, or helping others, until one knows oneself. For example in

^a This kind of school teaches Gurdjieff's ideas using special instructors. Students are divided into groups depending on their level of advancement. Such schools can function if they are actively supported by pupils.

schools of psychoanalysis, analysts have to undergo psychoanalytical treatment themselves before beginning work with patients, to prevent projection of their own problems on patients. The need to know oneself is recognised by contemporary analytical psychology and counselling. In the Fourth Way the principle of knowing oneself is the foundation of the Gurdjieff system. It is always at the centre of all student activities. Its purpose is to know all our 'I's, our reactions, emotions, behaviour patterns, habits, ways of thinking, and to observe our relations with others. To attain deep knowledge of oneself is therefore a very long and difficult process.

The process of gaining knowledge about ourselves should begin with learning about its methods. The basic method is self-observation. During the first phase of work self-observation must not include any analytical elements, meaning we should not try to answer such questions as: why do we behave like this and not the other way? How is our behaviour connected with other psychological elements and mental functions? Self-observation should be limited at this stage to the registration of facts relating to our behaviour and activities. Man should start observation from zero level, i.e. as if he did not know himself at all. All the observations and experiences collected during his past life should be discarded because they were based on incorrect assumptions.

Self-observation should not begin with the observation of our moods, feelings and negative attitudes, such as boredom, anxiety or depression. It should start from the observation of our various 'I's. We have to remember that during the observation of our 'I's we must not identify ourselves with these 'I's. To avoid this we should divide ourselves into two persons. One person is observing, the other is being observed. In practice this means that a person observing himself should not state "I have a negative attitude", but should think "he has a negative attitude". This process should be carried out simultaneously on two levels: on the first level we register what we are doing, observing, behaving; on the second level - how we observe, act, respond, etc. The observer should be emotionally separated from the observed, but at the beginning this might be too difficult to do. For example, we could observe our emotion of growing anger and thoughts connected with this feeling. However, if our emotions begin to dominate our observing 'I', it will become impossible to observe this anger any further. If the willpower of the observing 'I' is stronger than the one of the observed 'I', then the whole process will run correctly, and the observed anger and the related thoughts will not have power over the observer.

During the observation a person should distinguish between various feelings and psychological states and identify which centres are responsible for their mental, emotional, moving and instinctive functions. The first step in learning the method of self-observation should be to gain understanding of these functions and the differences between them. Depending on which centre determines the behaviour of man, this centre dominates his process of observation. And therefore man Type One perceives by sensations, man Type Two by feelings, and Type Three perceives using his intellect. Since perfect types do not exist, in practice people perceive using various combinations of the above functions. This might cause substantial problems and

complications in correct classification, and later on, in the correct analysis of the observations. Under ideal conditions man should observe himself using three functions simultaneously. This would secure proper and complete recognition of the observed situations. At the beginning we use the intellectual centre for the observation process because this part of our mind is under our control. After gaining experience and elimination of negative emotions, we should be able to bring our emotional centre to the process of observation.

The quality of the results of observations depends on our honesty, integrity, sincerity and the acceptance of truth, however painful it might be. If deep inside ourselves we do not accept the results of the observations, we will find ourselves in deadlock, and will be confused and negative about our work. On the other hand, if we accept our observations we will notice, even if we are unable to change anything, that this assent will gradually help us to reduce the intensity of the effect of the observed event, and we will be able improve our life.

One of the most difficult aspects of the self-observation process is the length of time needed to notice the majority of our characteristics. Some of them can only be observed in specific situations that might not often occur. In a certain sense, the process of learning about ourselves depends on the situations encountered in life. Therefore, people living in very stable and comfortable conditions do not have the opportunity to observe many of their character traits. To improve and speed up this process, people should try to change their environment and to expose themselves to new trials. To accelerate the process of self-observation, Gurdjieff arranged for his pupils highly stressful, artificial situations, so that they would have the opportunity to see themselves and their reactions under difficult and unusual conditions^a.

Besides self-observation one might consider other methods of obtaining self-knowledge. One could, for example, ask for help through counselling services normally available for difficult youngsters or estranged marriages, where a qualified and wise 'guide' could tell us what we are and explain the origins of our problems. Unfortunately, telling other people about their faults and wrong behaviour is useless because we are well protected against other people's psychological attacks, by our buffers, our good opinion about ourselves and the imaginary picture of ourselves. Showing someone his wrong doings does not change anything, but will only release hostile feelings and a defensive attitude. To the more effective methods of learning about ourselves, we could include psychoanalysis which helps patients to discover the origins of their problems, and in this way reduces their psychological pressures. Psychoanalysis is not the best tool to 'know yourself' because it requires a lot of time and is not concerned with all the aspects of man's personality. Psychoanalysis is more suitable in providing help to people who are deeply disturbed and are unable to cope with their lives. However, the method proposed by Gurdjieff is suitable for normal, healthy, psychologically balanced persons.

^a Examples of such unusual conditions are given in chapter 9.

Observation of man's centres

The first step in the process of self-observation is to work on the centres of functioning. We should begin with very simple activities such as registration of our thoughts - what we are thinking about, why we are thinking about certain things and how we are doing this. We should notice how long we are able to concentrate on one topic. How quickly our thoughts start 'wandering' without us being aware of it. Do we control our thinking process? We should start observing our basic physical sensations such as cold, hot, what we see, hear, how do we move, where we are going, how we sit down, stand up, lay down, etc.

When we observe ourselves we must identify and connect the observed phenomena with the corresponding centre. Although, theoretically, it should be relatively easy to identify the functioning of our centres, in practice it is not so simple. People have substantial difficulties in classifying their observations and often ascribe emotional or instinctive functions to the intellectual centre because it plays a dominant role in their lives. It is particularly difficult to understand the differences between thought and feeling, and feeling and sensation. During these observations we have to remember that mental functions compare two or more impressions, emotional functions label and identify the received impressions as pleasant or unpleasant, and impressions coming from the five senses belong to the instinctive centre.

It is important to notice if the correct centre is being used to perform certain functions because often a wrong centre is selected. In Chapter 1 it was explained that the emotional centre, at the moment of stress, will take control over the intellectual centre, causing upset and resulting in making hasty decisions that require quiet reflection and rational analysis. On the other hand, when we use our intellectual centre instead of our emotional centre, we are very ineffective in understanding complicated emotional situations because the intellect is not able to discern and understand many shades of our feelings, and it cannot analyse our sensations. It is noticeable how difficult it is to describe our feelings evoked by listening to music, or tasting appetising food. We have to realise and remember that a large part of our lives is controlled by the instinctive and moving centres.

Usually our centres can work without the participation of our consciousness, however we should be conscious of their functioning because this can enhance their performance and make its activity more acute. The process of observation of our centres helps us to become aware of their functioning. It is not necessary to be conscious of the functioning of our instinctive centre.

Struggle with identification

The identification process described in Chapter 1 is the most harmful feature of man impeding his development because it obstructs his self-observation. If a person identifies himself with what he is observing, he will not be able to have an objective approach and correct judgement of the studied phenomena, similar to a man who is standing on a wooden plank and is trying to lift it. Identification is an extremely strong condition that makes a man psychologically impaired because it blinds him to the rest of

the world. Therefore to one of the most critical struggles of the processes of self-observation belongs a fight with the state of identification. A person can identify himself with his own image, dreams, with his various 'I's, feelings, emotions - especially negative ones, and also with his own suffering. The struggle with identification with one's own suffering should be carried out right from the beginning of the work because this identification gives us a high opinion of ourselves, and as a result we feel more worthy.

Hundreds of various kinds of identification should be studied and analysed during self-observation. It is the most difficult, but also a very rewarding part of this process because the recognition of identification reduces its strength and we will become free from the stranglehold of our feelings. After a certain time of self-observation, a person is more aware of his internal states, and as a result of this he should be able to anticipate certain states of identification before he is overcome by them.

Strife with the influences of imagination

As we mentioned, the aim of self-observation is to identify facts concerning our life. However it is not a straightforward task and usually we have many excuses, explanations and justifications why we are unable to notice certain facts that show us in a bad light. If we are, for example, stingy, we will not notice it because we are not aware of it, while it is clearly visible to others. If we tend to speak ill about others, we will not register this fact. The main obstacle in observing our behaviour is our imagination that interferes with seeing our true characteristics.

Gurdjieff maintained that imagination is, to a great extent, responsible for the lack of progress of man's development. If, for example, we are convinced that we know ourselves very well, this will hinder our development process. Imagination is so powerful because it acts as a substitute for reality, and what is even worse, it satisfies all of man's centres of functioning. Nicoll said that if we mention the need for self-observation to an average person, we will most likely hear this answer: " Oh, yes, all this is nothing new to me. I have always observed myself"¹⁵⁶. Such people will never change because they imagine that they know everything about themselves.

In Chapter 1 are shown the influences of imagination on the behaviour of man. As a result of imagination each person creates his/her own picture of himself, presenting, e.g. as a tolerant, kind person, or a clever and hard businessman. We imagine, as in the story about a magician that we are these lions or eagles, or at least, that we are pleasant and respectable people. There is an interesting question: how does this imaginary picture really reflect reality? In most cases one could say that the true picture is the opposite of the imaginary one. For example, a man considering himself a charitable person is unmerciful, a man thinking himself to be wise is probably stupid, etc.

An important step in our work is to notice our own imaginary picture and being fully aware of its existence. However we should not destroy it until we have accepted a new 'vision' of ourselves which is closer to reality. Gradually we will cease liking our old 'picture' of ourselves, we will distance ourselves from it, and

then it will lose its hypnotic power. At a certain moment when we realise that we are completely different from the original picture, we will lose it for ever.

To lose the illusions about ourselves we should ask ourselves questions like: Can I identify myself with my own level of consciousness? Do I decide when to be conscious? How long can I stay conscious? Do I deceive myself thinking that I am able to do what I want? Am I a slave of a situation or circumstances? Do I carry out what I intended to do? If we could honestly try to analyse the answers to these or similar questions, we could have sometimes moments of lucid awareness that our perception of reality is not as we consider it to be. The above questions refer to the most sensitive and important part of our personality - our self-esteem, to our high opinion about ourselves and conviction about our superior position in the world. Any attempts by strangers to undermine our opinion and position would usually meet with our strong resistance and opposition.

The struggle with our imagination is a very arduous task and it needs a lot of time. Even observation of our imagination alone is not straightforward because when someone is trying it, the imagination will stop functioning. During the self-observation process a person becomes more conscious and this state will reduce the power of imagination. According to Gurdjieff, imagination is the most important force driving humankind and is responsible for most of the evil on Earth. He maintained that we should be able to check its influence by developing, during the self-observation process, a special conscious memory that will counteract the memory of our unreal, imaginary picture.

Gurdjieff stressed that imagination tend to destroy in us the motivation to improve ourselves. Why should we change, if we do not see any necessity for it, if we do not see our true picture, our true behaviour, our true 'real' situation. We will begin working, when we lose some of our illusions. However we can only lose them as a result of the work on ourselves, and this situation can become a vicious circle.

Work on our 'I's

To begin self-observation, a person must free himself from the power of his many 'I's because otherwise he will be under the illusion of having just one 'I', and this will hinder his work. At the beginning, instead of trying to notice a very large number of individual 'I's, we should observe groups of 'I's. Our personality consists of several different sub-set personalities, and each sub-set includes many 'I's. There are groups responsible for our professional and public lives, others for our personal and family lives, etc. As was mentioned, we should develop a special observing 'I' that should stay outside of our observed 'I's to secure effective and impartial registration of facts. One could say that the observing 'I' is like a spy working in the enemy castle, trying to 'photograph' the remaining 'I's. In practice this taking of snap shots is not a trivial task because some 'I's have a hypnotic power over us. When the observing 'I' is weak and is not supported by the willpower of man, it could identify itself with other strong 'I's like envy, jealousy or vengeance and in this case it would not be able to fulfil its functions and to identify these dominating 'I's.

One of our most detrimental traits is suspicion because it exerts a strong influence on people. It triggers negative emotions and leads to unpleasant conclusions. The less we realise our own deceitfulness the more we will be suspicious of others. Continuous suspicion of other people's intentions, especially those nearest to us, can be a very destructive force in our lives. Suspecting 'I's are very harmful because it is very difficult to free ourselves from their influence. These 'I's create a mental picture based on deceitfulness for their own use. Suspecting 'I's change the facts to fit them to their preconceptions. For this purpose such 'I's tend to change the memory contents, so everything confirms the presumed interpretation of events. These 'I's can use the intellectual centre to create supporting arguments. They can cause man to live in an imaginary, unreal world.

During the struggle with the suspecting 'I's we have to keep a balance between suspicion and credulity. The removal of suspecting 'I's should not influence our correct judgement of received information and we should not blindly believe everybody in everything. We should always judge the trustworthiness of sources of the received information, the benefits gained by people who are giving us this information, and when in doubt we should check the data.

Another group of 'I's is involved in slander. These 'I's manifest themselves by various means of twisting the truth, such as defamation, slander or calumny. They can be dangerous because they can turn against the 'owner', - and a person could start slandering himself. Then they might change man's attitude towards himself, he may lose his self-esteem, self respect and eventually they could destroy him. 'I's belonging to the groups creating suspicion, slander, hate, revenge, envy or jealousy, can be deeply rooted in our mentality, and in practice we have to fight with them throughout our whole lives.

A group of 'I's belonging to the worrying kind causes internal stress, can make people depressed and over-anxious. These 'I's are harmful because their activity is directed against the 'owner' and can dominate a person's life. They may be visible at almost every occasion because everything can be a subject of worry, i.e. health, work, lack of money, business, family, friends. As soon as one worry is over these 'I's arrange, almost immediately, something else to worry about. Any new condition or situation can give rise to endless worrying. Nicoll wrote that these 'I's are like flies, and can settle down on anything¹⁵⁷. Observation of these 'I's will help us to see their functioning, how and when they rule us. At the beginning we might not see our own worrying 'I's, but we will notice them in other people.

The complicated life 'I's are similar to the worrying 'I's. They try to persuade us that everything we want to do is much more difficult than it is in reality. They direct our attention towards unimportant and often not relevant trivial issues. Their purpose is to make our life complicated by exaggerating problems, muddling given situations, finding possible dangers, proving that it is impossible to complete a given task. They cause misunderstanding between people, resulting in the delay of achieving common aims.

The sensational 'I's like creating 'scenes', to cause quarrels, to produce unnecessary excitement, which could even lead to hysteria. Their objective is to exaggerate emotional situations and cause us to lose control of

ourselves. They operate mainly in the emotional centre, but they are also active in the work of other centres. In the moving centre they like to scream or to make violent gestures; in the intellectual centre they could shout: 'I cannot stand this any longer', or 'This is too much'. They are our enemies but we like them because they provide a sense of drama, they help to relieve one's tension and can be used to intimidate and bully others.

There are 'I's that like to be ill and they attract various illnesses. The habit of liking illness could have been formed early, e.g. because parents demonstrated their love and care of a child only during the periods of its illness. People like these 'I's because they bestow on them a sense of worthiness, e.g. that they have so much courage, are able to bear suffering so well. Illness is often an ideal excuse and justification for passive behaviour, i.e. not doing anything in situations that require some action or effort. Gurdjieff maintained that 80 percent of man's illnesses have a psychological basis, and are caused by our 'I's.

We do not have, obviously, only harmful 'I's. We have many good and useful 'I's that were formed very early, but they disappeared owing to the absence of a suitable environment and the lack of practice. There are 'I's that like music, dance, poetry and literature, but this inclination might have faded away as a result of laziness or the influence of friends and family. To important 'I's from this group belong ones that are responsible for caring about and helping others, and being involved in charitable functions; 'I's that are responsible for our own and other people's lives. We should observe, notice and take care of these useful and important 'I's, not forgetting about 'I's concerned with the work on self-improvement and the development of consciousness.

The above list does not include all our 'I's that should be observed, but gives an indication of how many 'I's exist. Observation, evaluation and understanding of the mechanisms that are responsible for our feelings and behaviour will gradually lead to the formation of a real picture of ourselves and eventually to our true 'I'. We have to remember that it is not possible to change things that have not been observed because 'to observe' means in practice the same as 'to know'.

To illustrate the development of man Gurdjieff uses an Eastern parallel about a palace full of servants. He relates the functioning of our 'I's to the behaviour of the servants when there is no supervisor. In such a situation without any control, everybody does what he wants to do, and the palace is in a state of anarchy. As a result of the self-observation process, there is created in us a certain type of control that can be compared to the selection of a deputy steward amongst the servants. This means that more conscious 'I's begin to take control of our life. The deputy steward gradually introduces order in the palace and does not allow individual 'I's to rule. As a result of the selection of the deputy steward and his work, the palace is being prepared for the arrival of the true steward, and he in turn will prepare it for the coming of the owner. In this parallel the arrival of the owner represents formation of the true 'I' in man.

Struggle with negative emotions

Man will not advance even one step in his development until he has begun observing and wrestling with his negative emotions. At the origin of emergence of negative emotions there are two human characteristics: aggression and egocentricity, that strongly interfere with our work on self-development. When we are under the influence of our negative emotions, our emotional centre is so preoccupied with them that it is unable to take part in our work. The first step in the struggle is to prepare a list of all our negative emotions. It should include, besides strong negative emotions such as fear, anger, hate, envy, other less perceivable negative emotions such as various stages of depression, self pity, a sense of wrong doing, resentments, ill-feelings, grudges, satisfaction from others' ill-fortune, and the feeling of contempt for others. Each of these emotions permeate a poison that destroys our lives. To the list we should add emotions which are normally not considered to be negative, such as various forms of self-satisfaction, overestimation of our merits and qualities that could release in us identification with ourselves. Everybody is a slave of his negative states and what is worse, often likes some of them very much. Therefore only well disciplined self-observation can make it possible to first identify and next to control them.

Negative emotions are much worse than just being useless because they absorb our energy, use up our time and have a destructive influence on our psyche, therefore we should make a special effort to prevent their domination. The situation is more difficult when we identify ourselves with some of our negative emotions because then we are unable to observe them. In such a case all our psychic energy is being used by the negative emotions and nothing is left for our development work.

Our imagination also impedes our fight with negative emotions. People who have a very high opinion about themselves, for example, imagine that they are friendly, tolerant, easy going, sociable, forgiving, etc., do not realise that this picture is the result of their imagination and is concealing negative emotions. Therefore it is important that we should be aware of the connection between the working of our imagination and our negative emotions. Our relationships with other people, especially in marriage, could easily be harmed by negative emotions, and Nicoll wrote on this subject: "The emotional life of a man and a woman is completely destroyed by the presence of these many forms of negative emotion. How can you expect people who from early childhood upwards have imitated and absorbed every kind of negative emotion ever to come together?".¹⁵⁸

In the next phase of the work, we should try to get rid of negative emotions. To achieve this we have not only to observe them but we should analyse them to gain full understanding of their functioning. We have to be aware of their existence to anticipate their growth. During an emotional conflict or a quarrel it is too late to control our negative emotions, therefore it is necessary to work out a method to prevent them arising. For example, some intellectual 'I's, independent of the emotional centre, should be able to look into a conflict situation without emotions, i.e. objectively. If we succeed in these 'I's controlling our behaviour, we should be able to relieve the tension and prevent the negative emotions taking control.

It is important to understand the origins of negative emotions. They do not come into being because of the wrong behaviour of other people, nor as a result of difficult circumstances. They always arise inside us because we allow them to do so. In daily life, almost everywhere, we meet unpleasant, rude, aggressive, negatively disposed people, but we must not allow them to influence our emotions because if we do, we will become their slaves.

The principle of the Fourth Way says "you have a right not to be negative", but it does not say "you have no right to be negative". The Fourth Way gives realistic directives that we should try to follow. A person with many 'I's and uncontrollable imagination is unable not to have negative emotions, therefore the latter rule would be unrealistic and would dishearten the followers of this way. We know that when we choose this way we will not be forced to do anything impossible to achieve a certain level of our development.

After a certain time of observing our negative emotions we will begin to feel a kind of disgust with ourselves, and this will be an indicator of our progress. Sometimes it takes many years of work before we stop liking our negative emotions and begin to get rid of them.

Self-remembering

As we progress through the process of learning about ourselves, and begin to understand our habits, emotional reactions, ways of thinking, our various 'I's, we might, from time to time, experience flashes of other levels of consciousness. Gurdjieff calls this state 'self-remembering'. Self-remembering is a conscious effort of perceiving oneself as a wholeness, sensing our unique 'I', while we are observing external events and our internal states. It is a state of awakening, not only towards the world, but also towards oneself. Self-remembering has many levels, and therefore each person can individually, on his level, practise and experience self-remembering. This process includes not only self-observation, but also the elements of concentration and self-awareness, and therefore it is very difficult to describe. We know that it is equally difficult to describe the taste of salt, but once we have tried it, we will know it for ever.

Our behaviour, while in the state of self-remembering, can be illustrated by the following situation. We find ourselves in this state when we are doing something inappropriate such as identifying ourselves with a strong negative feeling. When we become aware of this state we should be able to stop this identification process. Nicoll described self-remembering by using a 'paradox', saying "Real self-remembering is to try to remember something that you are not"¹⁵⁹. What he means is that we should forget for a moment what we in reality are, forget about our many 'I's, our identifications and about many harmful factors relating to our development habits. Man should begin to realise that there exists a state of consciousness that is able to transcend his daily reality. Gurdjieff said: "Man should remember himself, but which one?" This means that he should remember this himself who knows his own nothingness.

Nicoll said about the process of self-remembering:

"When a man remembers himself he seeks not to be identified with his Personality. He seeks another feeling and sense of himself. He seeks to not know himself, as it were - to empty himself of himself. He makes himself passive. He wishes to receive something that has hitherto not been granted to him. He seeks to lift himself above himself- above the noise of himself-above the inner clamour of negative emotions, grievances, fears, suspicious feelings, anxious thoughts, worries, money, professional and business excitements, above odd vanities and conceits, and false self-valuation and, I might add, false valuation of others. He seeks to distinguish something in himself that is not any of these things nor a thousand other similar things created by life in him"¹⁶⁰.

In the full state of self-remembering all our centres should take part, because if only one or two participate, the remaining centres could disturb this process. It is worth mentioning that self-remembering is not directly connected with the centres of functioning, but that it takes place beyond them. It does not disturb the work of the centres, rather the opposite, it can sharpen their operation. During self-remembering our centres can become more acute and their performance can be substantially enhanced. We can begin to notice and feel things which we were not able to discern before.

In the beginning of Phase One of the work on self-development, we do not normally have control over our emotional and instinctive centres, therefore we should try to achieve some form of partial self-remembering by using the intellectual centre that is, to a certain degree, under our control. Although initially, we are unable to control our behaviour, our imagination or to realise our unawareness of deceiving ourselves, we should be able to control our thoughts. The thinking process, then, could create appropriate conditions for self-remembering, but it would be necessary, before we use our intellect, to eliminate certain harmful thoughts that might lead to self-identification. Gradually self-remembering stops being limited to the intellectual centre and it begins to include other centres. Then the proper process of awakening begins to take place, which will lead to the third state that is self-consciousness that is the beginning and the end of our development process.

One of the exercises that facilitates self-remembering includes striving to stop thinking, to suppress completely any thought arising in our mind. It is very difficult to achieve this type of control, and at the beginning we may succeed to be in this 'thoughtless' state for only a few minutes. To extend this period we need strong willpower, energy and concentration, and it might help if we repeat to ourselves: "I do not want to think about anything".

One of the most important objectives of self-remembering is to create and shape our 'true' 'I'. The true 'I' exists on a higher and more profound level than the ordinary, common 'I's, but everybody has a possibility of reaching it and getting in touch with it. It belongs to the higher centres of functioning and understands their language, while ordinary 'I's are unable to communicate with the higher centres. The true 'I' represents what man truly is, and knows why he exists. Reaching the true 'I' is the turning point and is one of the

most important achievements on the way to perfecting human development. On one occasion Gurdjieff said: "Behind real 'I' lies God"¹⁶¹.

Self-remembering leads us to a new state of consciousness. In this state we will not be susceptible to suggestions any more, we will not be under the influence of the excitements of passing moments. We will not be able to live a life, as in the past, in a low state of awareness. We will not be able to identify ourselves with many elements, feelings and situations because now we understand the mechanism of their functioning. We begin to lead a more conscious life, to keep a certain distance from daily events and we will start to detach ourselves from many acquired 'I's. Using the parallel about the palace full of servants, the state of self-remembering corresponds to the introduction of a proper Steward, who begins to control all our 'I's. When the Steward attains full control, the palace will be ready for the reception of the owner - our true 'I'.

In the beginning we will have brief flashes of self-remembering, but as we accumulate understanding and experience of this process, our knowledge of ourselves will grow. As a result of the struggle between the essence and personality, a new internal relationship will appear. We will learn new facts about our personality and our functioning. This will cause the personality to release its power over us and it will reduce the grip that is choking our essence. Identification is not unavoidable any more; we are ready to start a new work demanding a higher degree of self-control. This work concerns our relationship with others, and interaction with people. Thus we are ready for the next phase of the development work.

The second phase of work

Non-expression of negative emotions

In the second phase of work we begin to apply in practice, in our relationships with other people, what we have learnt in Phase One, i.e. we are using our knowledge attained during the self-observation and self-remembering stages. The first rule of the second phase that we should apply in our everyday life is to try to restrain ourselves from the expression of our negative emotions, especially when these emotions are directed against other people. This does not mean that we should suppress the feeling of our negative emotions, quite the opposite. In this phase we should be able to observe our negative emotions without identifying with them, and we should understand their origins. We should therefore be able to keep our thoughts connected with these emotions to ourselves, without sharing them with others. Not showing our negative emotions is a difficult task, because it increases internal tension and causes a struggle between essence and personality. Nicoll explained this to his students as follows:

"I will remind you of the first step - namely, we are not asked to like. But to stop dislike and all its ramifications. .. Later, when you feel the presence of negative emotion in you, as a foreign substance, as acutely as a stomach-ache, then you will seek, for your own reasons, to work on yourself and transform your inner state for your own inner health."¹⁶²

Study of negative emotions, observation and analysis of behaviour, belongs also to the key methods of contemporary psychoanalysis and has been applied since its origins. However the Fourth Way differs fundamentally from the methods of psychotherapy, self-help and other mutual care groups, in that it treats man's negative emotions as superfluous. This means that there is no need for a free expression of our negative emotions. Gurdjieff maintained that negative emotions can be suppressed without any risk of creating any unwanted compensating behaviour. However it is important to understand that these negative emotions are not suppressed automatically, but at first we must be aware of them, we should observe them within us, and only then block their external expression. If we do not show our negative emotions, we will benefit by reducing mutual tension between us and adversaries. We know that normally people respond to our negative emotions by negative behaviour that in turn will enforce our negative feelings. By non-expression we will break this 'positive' feedback feeding our negative emotions.

Our final aim should be not only suppression of the expression of negative emotions, but we should also try to remove them entirely from our lives. It is one of the most important objectives, because if the negative emotions remain inside us, they will cause us to be cut off from our higher emotional and intellectual centres, and therefore they will prevent us from obtaining our true 'I'. Negative thinking about other people or situations is as harmful as negative behaviour, and therefore it should be eliminated as soon as possible from our lives.

Conscious labour

The next phase of the self-development work includes not only gaining self-knowledge but also work for the benefit of other people. This is a different kind of work from that normally performed. Gurdjieff calls it 'conscious' labour. We will try to answer the following questions: What is a specific characteristic of this kind of work? Which labour could be called conscious? What is the difference between the conscious and the normal work?

All creatures living on Earth have to meet the requirements of Nature to stay alive. Obtaining food, securing shelter, care of offspring, etc. belong to the basic activities of man and cannot be described as conscious labour because they are necessary for his survival. Also, the effort originating from our personality or nature leading to the improvement of our lives, to achieve something such as better education, to be a stronger or a better man, to give up addictions cannot be treated as conscious work. None, even the hardest labour that we have performed to gain some kind of benefit or satisfaction, cannot be classified as conscious. Only the labour that does not bring any kind of benefit whatsoever to us could be recognised as conscious.

The difference between these two kinds of work, i.e. conscious labour and needing to stay alive, is not sensed instinctively. The first rule of conscious labour is that it originates from the needs of other people, not from our wishes. Only when we do something because it must be done, because, for example, somebody

needs help, not because we find satisfaction from helping others, then we will be freed from egoism. If we work for ourselves, it is always connected with self-gratification, therefore it is corrupted by our self-love.

Let us illustrate the concept of conscious labour by considering two situations. For our own satisfaction, we anonymously donate our hard earned money for a charitable cause, which means indirectly we donate our work. However this cannot be treated as conscious labour, because we were motivated by our personal gratification. In another situation, we give somebody money in front of witnesses. We give it because somebody needs money and must be helped, not because we want to show our good heart. In this case we perform conscious labour and it is of no importance that many people know about it.

To summarise, one could say that the fact that labour we perform could help our self-development is determined by our internal motivation, and not by the opinion of others about us. The idea of conscious labour is connected with help for the future. The sower sows the seeds, but somebody else will harvest it. Working for others and for the future is the essential criteria of conscious labour.

The importance of conscious labour was emphasised in the Gospel. For example, in the Sermon on the Mountain, Jesus clearly said about the work that does not give us any satisfaction: "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven... But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth".¹⁶³

The role of suffering in self-development

Ashiata Shiemash explained to his followers that the way to full consciousness is leading through conscious labour and intentional suffering^a. Therefore, besides the effects of conscious labour, it is important to understand the role of intentional suffering, especially because, in general, people suffer a lot and therefore could assume that all their suffering will bring the same benefits. During the work on ourselves we have to differentiate between various kinds of suffering we experience and treat it in different ways. Gurdjieff distinguished the following groups of suffering: mechanical, unconscious, conscious and intentional. This division is not exclusive and some types of suffering could belong to two groups. During self-observation we should determine to which group our suffering belongs and treat it accordingly.

Mechanical suffering

To this group belong all kinds of suffering caused by ourselves, i.e. which result from our relationship with other people or from the situation we are in. These sorts of sufferings are very subjective and very personal, this means that nobody, besides us, will be able to understand them. They originate from our uncontrolled negative emotions, and our lives are full of them, because they are inseparable from our personality. To this group we could include internal considering of what others think about us, how others treat us, internal accounting of good deeds we have done and bad deeds we received from others, remembrance of

^a See Chapter 3.

grievances, wrong doings of others and received injustice, all kinds of ill-treatment, sense of bad luck, and a list of various unhappy events being continuously refreshed by our memory. For example, a man could feel that he never met a woman who could understand him, a woman could feel unhappy that she never married, or never had any children, or her husband was no good; our conviction that we were never understood by our parents, spouses, children etc. The list of mechanical suffering is long and very individual. It should also include considerations beginning with the statements "If only I .." such as: If only I had more luck; if only I was more pretty; if only I met the right person; if only I had better parents, if only I had more money etc. - then my life would be splendid. Other forms of mechanical suffering are feelings of defeat and failure. It happens that someone, who never put much effort into achieving something important in his life, has failed, and in a strange way is also happy about it. He knows inside that he does not have to try again, to fight against the odds, struggle, take risks, nor does he have to face his adversities. These kinds of suffering are very deceitful because they bring a feeling of peacefulness and resignation, although we should remember that mechanical sufferings are deceitful only when we do not admit that they exist.

During self-observation we should identify the various types of our mechanical sufferings and try to reduce their strength and eventually remove them. The sufferings that bring some kind of satisfaction are the most difficult one to uproot and we should concentrate on this type right from the beginning of the work.

Conscious and unconscious sufferings

Unconscious sufferings include mechanical sufferings as already discussed, but here let us consider another kind of suffering that is completely beyond our control and cannot be eliminated as a result of our efforts. The sufferings that result from wars, natural disasters, illness, starvation and the death of our nearest and dearest. Such sufferings could be in the corporeal form, such as pain, exhaustion and physical disability; and mental suffering, arising from external circumstances or caused by the ill-treatment of us by other people, such as fear, mental torment, abasement and sexual abuse.

When we consciously accept suffering, when we do not struggle with it or rebel against it, then it becomes conscious. However we should accept it not because of our inertia or laziness, but through making a conscious decision. For example, if we are short of money and starve, this will belong to unconscious suffering, and is completely useless to our development. However if we fast, this is a form of conscious suffering and will bring us benefit. Gurdjieff said that voluntary suffering of our own accord has a completely different effect on us than forced suffering that is not accepted by us. He maintained that suffering is only useful when it occurs simultaneously in several centres, e.g. in the instinctive, emotional and intellectual centres. Severe suffering acting in only one centre i.e. pain in the instinctive centre or strong grief in the emotional centre is harmful and could even cause insanity. Unconscious physical or mental sufferings could completely destroy a man's life. The same suffering, when consciously accepted, could lead to personal internal development.

We should begin the work on conscious suffering by selecting a few simple, most commonly occurring events causing us stress. For example, the most common suffering includes acceptance of the behaviour of some people. Gurdjieff said during one meeting: "To endure the manifestation of others is a big thing. The last for a man. Only a perfect man can do this. Start by making your aim or your God the ability to bear one manifestation of one person that you cannot endure without nervousness."¹⁶⁴

When we learn to bear with full consciousness the behaviour of others that causes us strong suffering, it does not mean that we accept bad behaviour. We will develop a certain distance from the unpleasant situation that will help us to avoid irritation and stress, then we will realise that we can neutralise our suffering. Besides the obvious immediate benefits we will gain much more, we will make an important step in the development of our being. The acceptance of suffering is one of the most difficult tasks on our development way, and therefore we should begin with accepting small discomforts and sufferings, and live with them without letting negative emotions arise in us. The idea of conscious suffering is very old and has been transmitted by esoteric teachings. This kind of suffering is often mentioned in Christian teaching. The best known is the Sermon on the Mountain where Jesus said: "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."¹⁶⁵

A very profound statement, showing the importance of suffering for our Redemption is given in Saint Paul's Letter to the Corinthians: " Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."¹⁶⁶

In this passage 'sorrow of the world' could be interpreted as unconscious suffering, and 'godly sorrow' , as conscious suffering.

Intentional suffering

Gurdjieff introduced a new kind of suffering which he called intentional. What is the axiom of this suffering? This is a type of suffering that results from a situation which we expose ourselves to, during the fulfilling our duties. For example, when we do something for the benefit of another person, we have to be prepared to accept possible ingratitude and having our intentions misunderstood. Intentional suffering is connected with intentional labour that is performed without any benefits to ourselves, including psychological well-being, satisfaction from being proud of our suffering and sacrifices for others that could bring popularity and recognition. Using this criteria, even such extreme sacrifice as giving one's own life as practised by the Japanese 'kamikaze', cannot be classified as intentional suffering. When we perform intentional labours we have to accept any problems and misery resulting from this work and continue with it regardless of the consequences.

Intentional suffering that is consciously accepted should not create a feeling of compulsion and should not require strong willpower to submit to. This is not the kind of suffering that the fakir is subjected to, when

he tortures his body. Intentional suffering does not include extreme mortification of the body, celibacy or extended isolation from people. It is more a 'natural' suffering that we should surrender to, like a swimmer, who is not fighting with the river currents, but floats and waits quietly, to see where the river will take him. Willpower is only needed to stay on and not to deviate from the chosen way.

Unfortunately there is not much information about intentional suffering because for the outsider it is very difficult to judge if somebody else's suffering belongs to this category. Therefore we will illustrate true intentional suffering using an example from Buddha's life. At the beginning he followed the way of conscious suffering, working on himself, applying extreme asceticism. After a while he realised that this way was not leading to freedom but to slavery. He searched and found a different way that helped him to understand people's suffering, and then he felt truly free. He decided to share his Enlightenment with others and for the next 50 years he worked very hard. His family turned against him, the Brahmins rejected his teaching. The whole of Buddha's life from the moment of Enlightenment onwards was filled with conscious labour and intentional suffering. This suffering was not imposed on him, but he accepted it as his duty. He recognised the necessity of his work for the benefit of future generations. This does not mean that he was an unhappy and miserable man. Quite the opposite, he was full of happiness and humour in spite of his life being full of work and suffering.

Is conscious labour and intentional suffering possible to achieve by only a few, 'chosen', outstanding individuals, like Buddha, leading an ascetic life? The present world is different, but the needs are much greater. Jesus said: "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few.."167. Everyone of us has his own patch to work on. Our family, friends, neighbours or strangers sometimes require from us an immense conscious effort and this will give us an opportunity to experience intentional suffering.

Waking up, death and re-birth

For whom is the work on the Fourth Way? It is for everyone who is not satisfied with what he has found in life. It is for those who feel that there must be something more important than worldly success or failures, that there exists more profound knowledge beyond that what we have been taught at school and whilst growing up; for everybody, who feels that the kind of life he is leading has no purpose, no sense; for everybody who realises that the history of humanity is the story of mutual hatred and killings of 'sub-human' species; for everybody who cannot find any satisfactory explanation of what is going on around him. These kind of people can search for 'other' knowledge, can try to find their own way that must exist somewhere.

When we begin our search, we will be surprised to find that there exists a lot of information about the knowledge we are looking for. This knowledge could come from various sources, such as religious esoteric teachings, hermetic teachings, alchemy, etc. and could be of different types, but it has a common theme - the transformation of man. The transformation consists of a special development process, of profound changes, true evolution of consciousness often called 're-birth'. To experience re-birth, we have to die. This

means that within us certain parts of our personality must die, as has to happen to our internal tyrant, who keeps us in a prison, who enslaves us. When all harmful elements have been removed, then something that is needed for a new life can arise in us. We can be born again, become aware of ourselves and acquire understanding of the sense of life and the purpose of man's existence on Earth¹⁶⁸.

The Fourth Way states that man, to be reborn, must die first. But to die in the right way, he must beforehand become awake. In what sense should he become awake? The process of awakening includes not only gaining understanding of what we truly are, of what the world and other people are, but also on working on the development of abilities that will help us to observe processes inside and outside of ourselves, and on the development of a strong internal need to change ourselves and to destroy our false personality. Our further development process will depend very much on the quality, strength and sincerity of our awakening. And therefore this awakening requires an enormous personal effort.

In many esoteric teachings death and re-birth are a recurring theme. In the New Testament we can find in many places, sayings such as: "And he cometh into the disciples, and findeth them asleep...Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. ...And he came and found them asleep again"¹⁶⁹ because Christ's disciples were asleep, while he prayed in the gardens of Gethsemane. "And said unto them, Why sleep ye? Rise and pray"¹⁷⁰. These sayings do not refer to an ordinary sleep and awakening, but are concerned with the need for internal awakening, necessary to achieve redemption. Gurdjieff has stated many times that the Fourth Way is to a large degree based on esoteric Christian teachings, but he emphasised that the meaning of these lessons is not easily accessible because the Gospels, although they include word-for-word sayings of Christ, were written and translated by people who did not understand them.

Before work on the awakening is started, one must search. An individual should search for the right way, he must know what he wants to learn, what he wants to achieve. He must find a suitable teacher, who will help him on this way. However the initiative and the effort must originate within ourselves. The fact that someone will show us the way, will not provide the right answers and will not help us in our development. It is self evident that nobody will begin to search if he does not feel that something important is missing from his life, that he is lost in this world, that he wants to find himself - and these are the answers to the original question: "Who could benefit from self-development work?"

The development of consciousness is a very personal process and cannot be accelerated by external influences. Objective Reason cannot be inherited and passed directly from parents to children without any effort. This means that each generation has to work from scratch to attain it, therefore the spreading of it will be very limited. However the situation is not totally hopeless, because people with a higher level of consciousness, exerting influence on the upbringing and education of their children, can make this process much easier for the next generation.

The presented process of development requires personal labour - there is no 'salvation by proxy' - and therefore the Fourth Way is as long and as difficult as any other way. Unlike many gurus and teachers,

Gurdjieff does not offer quick results, deceptive hopes that some meditation, breathing or other exercises are sufficient to cause change of what is so deeply rooted in man's psyche. He talks honestly about the heavy toil needed to develop oneself.

Chapter 8

Cosmology

Gurdjieff in his teachings proposes cosmology that is very different from the cosmologies presented by the majority of contemporary religions, or those which have been transmitted and have survived in the form of ancient myths, legends and beliefs of primitive tribes. There is only one common phenomenon linking Gurdjieff's cosmology with the cosmologies of monotheistic religions - the existence of one Creator who rules the Universe. However, according to Gurdjieff, the Universe is purely material and is governed by the cosmic laws corresponding to the known laws of physics and chemistry. Gurdjieff's God does not dwell in Heaven, and He is not a product of man's mental processes. He exists in the centre of the material Universe - in the place called by Gurdjieff the Most Holy Sun Absolute.

Genesis

In the beginning, the Universe was empty endless space, filled with a primordial cosmic substance called 'ethernokrilno'. In this Universe there existed only the Sun Absolute where dwelt our Creator. This existence could never end if the Creator would not ascertain that the Sun Absolute was almost imperceptibly, yet steadily, diminishing in volume. This process was caused by the Heropass^a that is defined as 'the flow of Time itself', which is beyond the control of our Creator. The Heropass is the inherent component of the existence and the main cause of the disintegration of the Universe. As a result of this process, the Sun

^a Heropass is discussed further in this Chapter in a section on the 'Relative meaning of time'.

Absolute would eventually dissolve in the empty cosmic space¹⁷¹. Using more scientific terminology one could say that the diminishing of the Sun Absolute was caused by the increase of entropy^a.

To stop this irreversible process of disintegration, the Creator was compelled to take certain measures and decided to create our , now existing 'Megalocosmos'. To do this He had to change the functioning of two primordial sacred cosmic laws: Triamazikamno -the law of Three, and 'Heptaparaparshinokhi' - the law of Seven. Originally these laws were acting only inside the Sun Absolute, but the Creator directed their action into the space of the Universe, and in this way there came into being the 'Emanation' of the Sun Absolute, which is now called 'Word-God'¹⁷². This process is in a certain sense, an equivalent of the 'Big Bang'¹⁷³, which is the name used for the present scientific hypothesis of the instant formation of the Universe.

The Creator participated only at the very beginning and has not established individual cosmic forms or the existence of life. He defined the mechanism and the laws directing the creation and the evolution of the matter in cosmos, and the subsequent creation proceeded automatically. First, from the primitive matter arose so called 'second-order-suns', or stars that might still exist. When the suns were functioning, the matter started concentrating around them and then planets appeared.

When the basic process of creation was completed, special transformations called 'evolution' and involution' came into being. As a result of this, new cosmic substances were being generated, and a system of reciprocal feeding and maintenance based on universal exchange of substances was established. As a result of this process, the equilibrium and stability was established in the Universe, not allowing the Heropass to cause anything unforeseen to the Sun Absolute¹⁷⁴.

The next phase of this process was the creation of life. From the point of view of the laws of physics life is somewhat 'magical' because it does not obey the law of increasing entropy, therefore it -is not affected by time. Julian Huxley, one of the most prominent evolutionists in the 20th century wrote: *"Evolution - this is a process running against the second law of thermodynamics with its degradation of energy and tendency to unity. With the help of solar energy biological evolution is marching up producing increasing variability and higher stages of organisation"*.¹⁷⁵

Individual organisms, of course, obey the law of thermodynamics, and after the temporary concentration of energy, they dissolve in the material space. But these beings leave behind their own copies that are the continuation of the same species. Owing to the existence of these true copies, life can last without any limits and is indestructible by the flow of time. Time has effect only on the sources of energy that are needed to sustain life. Although in one part of the Universe these sources are slowly running out of energy, at the same

^a The increase of entropy is defined by the second law of thermodynamics that states that the entropy of the isolated space is always increasing. It means that the distribution of energy (temperature) in a certain volume is equalising with time. The hot places slowly become cooler, and cold parts become warmer, and in this way the temperature in the whole space will eventually be the same.

time new suns able to support life arise in other parts of the Universe.^b Considering the known genetic mechanisms one could say that the biological life is eternal because it can outlast the lives of stars and galaxies. These 'magical' properties of the DNA structures are responsible for this unique, indestructible life process that does not need any external controls and help to survive.

As a result of the process that had been initiated by the Creator, there came into being a Universe that was independent of Heropass, and was not obeying the law of increasing entropy. However following the creation process a new system came into being that had a set of laws which were to be obeyed even by the Creator Himself. He can be compared to a card player who, once the rules of the game are established, will never be able to take an ace of spades with a two of clubs. The Creator does not have to control directly the functioning and the development of the Universe; He does not have to interfere with the established cosmic processes, but only He may prevent certain events that could run out of control of the laws and would cause destruction of a large part of the Universe.

Relationship between the Creator and man

The Creator, as described by Gurdjieff, is not a personal God involved with the lives of individual people. He does not control natural events and disasters such as floods, earthquakes, eruption of volcanoes, etc. He does not interfere with human problems and conflicts, i.e. wars, famines and many other types of suffering. The Creator does not help to solve individual personal predicaments such as illness, family problems, work stresses etc. He does not change the course of events. He does not defend the innocent and does not punish the perpetrators, does not heal the sick, and does not protect even the most deserving people from suffering and premature death. He does not answer people's prayers, who ask sometimes for the opposite, mutually excluding favours. He does not get involved with any covenants and bargaining vows, as presented in the Bible.

The Creator acts rather as a manager whose objective is to secure that the existence of the Universe is passing according to the laws of Nature, without any significant disturbances. The Creator takes action and would introduce corrections to the existing laws only, when it would become absolutely necessary, for example, when the existence of life in the Universe is threatened with extinction. The Creator is unable to prevent any catastrophe that might be resulting from the normal functioning of the Universe as defined by cosmic laws. For example, He will not be able to stop a wandering Comet colliding with the Earth. He can only function within the realm of the laws of Nature.

^b English astronomer Fred Hoyle proposed that life on Earth could arise as a result of bacteria coming from space. For example, frozen organisms could be transported by comets from other parts of the Universe. The latest scientific investigations show that the basic biological structures are able to survive high temperatures and pressures generated during entry to the Earth's atmosphere by comets from space.

According to Gurdjieff, the Creator is compassionate, merciful and He does care about mankind. He tries to help people, but is doing this indirectly, by showing people how they can help themselves. For this purpose he has been sending messengers onto Earth to teach people how to live. As was mentioned in Chapter 5, the most important messengers include Buddha, Lama, Moses, Christ and Muhammad. Because man has the possibility to attain a higher level of consciousness and Objective Reason, the main objective of the messengers was to help people achieving this aim.

When man would attain a higher level of consciousness, he would know what to do, how to behave, therefore there would be no need to be directed by God. Man possessing a higher level of consciousness and Objective Reason acquires god-like characteristics.

This is a very logical and plausible picture of God. Since it is difficult to imagine that God could be partial and could favour only the followers of a specific religion or sect. It would be difficult to comprehend why God should get involved with every human being on Earth and should be aware of their deeds. Why should God bestow grace onto some people and refuse others? Such commonly accepted picture of God could only result from our conceit and presumption that man is the most important being in the Universe, and therefore God should take care of him. People tend to imagine that the whole world, including God, centres on them.

This description of the role of the Creator differs very much from the picture of God presented, particularly, by all monotheistic religions. They show God as omnipotent and omniscient, i.e. God is able to foresee all future events and is able to act in the contravention of the laws of Nature. However these religions are unable to explain why innocent children are suffering and dying, why the worst misfortunes often happen to worthy and religious people, and at the same time why evil persons tend to prosper. Why many thousands of people are being killed in natural and man-made disasters such as floods, earthquakes, wars and famines. Why does God not protect people? The explanation that these calamities are caused by God's will present the Creator as uncaring, unmerciful or even cruel. By contrast, Gurdjieff's God is full of mercy and is deeply concerned about humankind.

Emergence of higher body forms

As a result of the creation process man came into being. The Creator decided to use man to help him in the administration of the enlarging Universe. For this purpose He has changed the original processes and conditions of his existence in such a way that people would have the possibility of acquiring Objective Reason individually. From this time onwards, human beings could possess two independent, coexisting forms - a physical body and the kesdjan body that is, in some esoteric teachings, called 'astral body'. The existence of the kesdjan body is associated with the development of a certain level of Reason, therefore not every person has the possibility to possess kesdjan, even intelligent and 'spiritual' people might not have it. When the required level of Reason is attained, newly created kesdjan begins to absorb certain sacred cosmic

substances and may create the highest body form, often called soul. The arising of soul is linked to the development of a higher level of Reason. However for soul to achieve immortality, it must attain Objective Reason. Then, after the death of the physical body, the soul can join the source of everything existing in the Universe - the Absolute.¹⁷⁶

Connected with each form of the body is a certain level of Reason and a level of consciousness determining the understanding of the purpose of man's existence. The highest, first form of reason is Objective Reason needed for the development and perfection of the soul. The second level of reason is connected with the existence of kesdjan. The lowest level of reason is manifesting itself in automatic functioning of man and his simple reactions to external stimuli. Gurdjieff described people on this level as 'absolute nothingness and calm'. He emphasised that to achieve Objective Reason no special supernatural abilities are required, nor does man have to attain a special privileged position, the only requirement being proper utilisation of man's 'grey matter', i.e. brain cells. The human brain and intelligence were destined by the Creator to fulfil this role.¹⁷⁷ Gurdjieff has no doubt that the development of soul is not connected with any influences of the Creator, but exclusively depends on man's own effort. The presented development of higher forms of body symbolises the development of man's consciousness and shows the way to achieve immortality.

What does happen after death?

Gurdjieff explains that after death, man's kesdjan and soul separate from the physical body and arise to the primary zone where special cosmic substances exist that are used for making the kesdjan body. The earthly body disintegrates slowly and reverts to the original building blocks. The existence of the kesdjan body is limited in time, and when the time allocated for it has expired, it will die. Then the kesdjan body has to decompose into the original substances, even if the soul has not reached the required level of development yet.

The soul has to stay together with the kesdjan body in the primary zone, until it has reached the required level of Reason. However it does not have to be with the original kesdjan, but can be with any kesdjan. When the original kesdjan has died, the soul can search for another 'free' kesdjan that has been left by a soul which has reached the required level. If the soul finds such kesdjan, it can move to it and exist until it has reached the necessary perfection. Souls do not decompose and exist in a given solar system until they reach Objective Reason, and when they are worthy to unite with the Absolute, they are able to separate from kesdjan and in this way will fulfil the purpose assigned to them by the Creator. A part of this process has been described, among others, by the reincarnation theory. However the description is wrong because it states that a soul is subjected to continuous reincarnation after each death into a new physical body.

Purgatory

Gurdjieff stated, that the highest body forms in the Universe that have attained Objective Reason were originally placed in the Sun Absolute, i.e. where dwells the Creator. However, after certain tragic cosmic events, the highest forms lost the possibility of existence in the Sun Absolute, therefore the Creator had prepared for them a special planet called Purgatory¹⁷⁸. This Planet started its function as a place for souls well after the creation of the Universe. This is not the same Purgatory that is, in the Catholic religion, used to purify the souls by suffering, but it is rather an equivalent of Paradise. According to Gurdjieff, this is the best, richest and most beautiful planet in the whole Universe. It is an ecological heaven where thousands of wells of the purest water are flowing, and thousands of species of the most beautiful singing birds would live. It contains the finest known samples of the flora and fauna. In special caves live the 'highest bodies' from the whole Universe¹⁷⁹. The description of this Purgatory has also another meaning. Such a place would be created on Earth by human beings, if they could attain Objective Reason. However in reality Earth is like a true purgatory.

Position of man in the Universe

According to Gurdjieff, people living on Earth are similar to other three-centred beings in other parts of the Universe. The difference is only one of scale. He said that all these beings are similar to the Creator. People often say "we are made in the image of God". Gurdjieff believes that, completely by chance, only this one is correct of all the notions that people hold about cosmic truths. "And indeed, each of them is the image of God - not of that 'God' they picture with their bob-tailed Reason, but of the real God". Gurdjieff said that people were created "Each of them, down to the smallest detail, is exactly similar, though in miniature, to the whole of our Megalocosmos, and in each of them there are all the separate functioning which actualise in the Megalocosmos the cosmic harmonious Iraniranumange, or 'exchange of substances,' maintaining the existence of everything existing as one whole."¹⁸⁰

There is no need to study and research the Sun to discover the matter of the solar system. This matter exists in us and consists of different elements. In this way we have inside us the matter of other worlds. Man is in the full meaning of this word a Universe in miniature. He consists of all kinds of matter that the Universe is also built from. The same forces, the same laws that govern the life of the Universe affect man. Therefore in learning about man we can learn about the whole World, and the reverse is true - by understanding the Universe we are able to understand more about man.

We know that the present astrophysical theories explain that all the elements we are made of originated in the interior of stars as a product of their nuclear reactions, therefore the above statement is close to our present knowledge of the Universe. To establish the position of man in the Universe we have to consider the structure of Cosmos. Man lives on the planet Earth that is part of the Solar System, therefore man belongs to this system. The Sun is a part of the Milky Way, and our galaxy is a part of the world of many galaxies,

therefore man belongs also to these galaxies. Astronomically we are unable to proceed further, but in theory we could imagine such state where everything is a Whole. This state is called the Absolute by Gurdjieff, therefore all the galaxies, stars, our Sun, the Earth and the Moon belong to the Absolute.

Man belongs to these systems, but each of them exerts a different influence on him. The Earth with its organic life has the greatest effect. The importance of the Sun is also visible, because without its energy there would not be any life on Earth. The effect of the Moon is noticeable through its gravitational action manifested by the sea tides. Stars and galaxies do exert a certain influence on man, even though by various cosmic radiation.

The purpose of man's existence

All beings in the Universe exist, according to Gurdjieff, to transform certain cosmic substances needed for the general cosmic trogoautoegocratic process. The main purpose of the existence of one or two centred beings (lower and higher animals) is transformation of substances for the needs of the planet they live on. The main purpose for the existence of the three centred beings, e.g. human beings, is the transformation of substances for the need of the whole Universe. However only human beings with the developed kesdjan body are able to fulfil this purpose. Because, as a result of the consequences of the organ kundabuffer, people lost the abilities of working for the need of the Universe, and therefore Nature has been forced to adapt itself to such a situation and started to utilise people in the same way as is it using animals, i.e. only for the needs of Earth.

Connected with the cosmic purpose of one-, two- and three-centred beings is the notion of the value of life of these beings. Gurdjieff maintains that for the Creator there is no difference between the value of lives of human beings and other beings, therefore He established such laws that Nature is able to adapt different beings to fulfil its purpose.¹⁸¹ Nature gave man life not for his pleasure, but to fulfil the cosmic purpose. Therefore Nature takes care of him, so that his life passes in reasonably acceptable conditions and that it will not be terminated prematurely. Gurdjieff said that Nature acts like a farmer, who feeds, cares and breeds sheep, cows or pigs, a good living environment. Is he doing it for their pleasure? No, eventually time will come when they will be used for meat. The same applies to people. Nature secures a reasonably long life, but when the time comes it will put us to death.

Our lives are driven by one great objective, set by the Creator, and we have to fulfil it. This is the main sense and purpose of our lives. We all are slaves of this design and willy-nilly we have to serve it, without any bargaining or compromise. All the people are equal slaves of Nature, however some humans are conscious of this purpose and as a consequence of their awareness they can achieve immortality, while the others, not understanding their function in the same way, passively serve the whole process, but when they have fulfilled Nature's objectives they become superfluous and will disappear for ever.¹⁸²

Gurdjieff stated very clearly that man has no privileged or central position not only in the Universe, but even on Earth. He is a constituent of Nature, but not its owner. Therefore man has no right to destroy other beings, and should be responsible for the proper functioning of that part of the terrestrial system that is under his control. Such approach does not originate from the position of man's interests, but from the understanding that man should fulfil the function as regards administration of this part of the Universe given to him by the Creator. One could say that Gurdjieff was a precursor of the modern ecological notion that is treating Earth as a living organism^a. He undermines man's deeply rooted conviction that he has the right to do what he wants with all living creatures, i.e. that he has the right to kill them and destroy Nature for his own benefit or pleasure. This is a very radical approach to the rights of man, and only very few people would support such a philosophy.^b Gurdjieff removes man, for the first time in history, from his pedestal and puts him on the same footing as other beings.

Two rivers of life

Gurdjieff compares man's life to a large river that originates from various sources on the Earth's surface. The life of an individual person could be compared with a drop of water that is a part of the river. The river flows along a flat valley until it arrives at a place where it divides into two rivers. One river continues the journey through various obstacles and at the end falls into a crevice and disappears in the Earth's precipice. The second river continues its journey through the valley until it reaches the ocean. The life of every man before it reaches a mature and responsible age corresponds to the drop of water in the first part of the river. The point of branching of the river corresponds to the attainment of maturity. A drop of water corresponding to the man who has obtained his true 'I' and achieved Objective Reason follows the first river. A drop of water corresponding to the man who has not worked on himself follows the second river. For a certain distance both rivers flow next to each other, allowing a man who has worked on himself to jump from the second stream to the first.¹⁸³ The water in the second river that has joined the ocean evaporates, changes into clouds giving rain and returns to the original river, thus taking part in the continuous cycle of life. The water in the stream entering the Earth is transformed into crystals and in this way achieves an immortal structure^c.

The flow of the rivers is controlled by cosmic laws that also apply to each drop of water, but only as being part of the river. The movements of an individual drop of water in the river, its direction and speed, are

^a The concept of Earth as a living organism called Gaia was introduced in the 1970s by J. Lovelock, a scientist working for NASA.

^b Similar ideas are proposed by Animal Rights Groups.

^c For easier understanding of this allegory, the author changed the destiny of the rivers. In Gurdjieff's story the drops of water that have flowed into the ocean, representing people with a higher level of consciousness, could be lifted into space by a cyclone. The stream falling into Earth, returns to the river by being changed into steam and clouds.

determined to some extent by chance. The drop has not got an individual destiny, but its fate is determined by the destiny of the whole river. Drops of water that exist in a given moment, could splash on a rock, in the next, evaporate and disappear, but this would not change the flow of the river.

The two rivers of life symbolise the vicissitudes of two groups of people. One group that has fulfilled its biological purpose will disappear for ever, the second group has a chance of immortality. This parallel shows that Nature gives us a chance to achieve Objective Reason in the later period of our lives, i.e. the possibility of crossing from one stream to the other. This is only possible for those people who have a strong and unquenchable thirst for changing streams and are prepared for long and hard work on their development.

Comparison of man's life to a drop of water in the river would be difficult to accept by modern men. We know that the life of man depends on hundreds of individual events that happen by chance, therefore we do not feel that our life is similar to other people's lives like two drops of water. But we would have to agree that the main flow of our life is similar to the lives of thousands or even millions of people. Looking at this parallel one could say that it depicts man as a passive being, not having much influence on his life. Such interpretation would be utterly false, because the most important decision to be taken by man in his life - to cross from one river to another- depends exclusively on man himself.

Relative meaning of time

Gurdjieff describes time as an unusual phenomenon that exists in the Universe and calls it 'Heropass', what means 'the flow of time'. All other phenomena in the Universe, wherever they exist, are a part of the phenomena that arose in the Sun Absolute. As a result of this, all cosmic phenomena have objective meaning because they originated from the same source. However time has no objective meaning, and therefore in the whole Universe it could be called 'ideal unique subjective phenomenon'. It flows independently and mixes with other phenomena that exists in the Universe. The most important characteristic of time is that it is beyond the control of the Creator and is causing increase of entropy i.e. disintegration of the Universe.

Time has no source of its origin and its existence cannot be precisely established in the same way as other cosmic phenomena. Time cannot be determined directly, but only by comparison with certain cosmic phenomena occurring under the same conditions in the same place. Time cannot be perceived by mind, senses or human instinct^a, although there exists a biological clock. Time on Earth is determined by such external phenomena as the movement of the Sun and the stars, or movements of mechanical devices. Nowadays a standard unit of time that has been established by science is based on the frequency of vibration

^a People completely isolated from external indicators of time e.g. they are locked in a room without windows and clocks, lose a sense of time and this is one of the worst mental tortures.

of atoms. It is used for comparison of different impressions of conscious beings and for the measurements of duration of various objective cosmic phenomena.

The peculiar property of time is that it is perceived in the same way and at the same sequence by all cosmic beings. Gurdjieff illustrates this giving as an example the process of the flow of time in a drop of water. Time flowing in this drop of water is the same as time flowing in the Universe. Assume that in this drop of water there exist special beings that live, multiply and die. These beings perceive and sense the flow of time by comparing the duration of phenomena around them, e.g. with the length of duration of their lives. From the stand of universal objectivity, the process of the flow of time in that drop of water is entirely subjective, yet to the beings existing at the same period of time it is perceived as objective because it corresponds to their whole lives, while from the stand of man it lasts only a few hours, or even minutes.¹⁸⁴

Fundamental cosmic laws

According to Gurdjieff, the Universe is governed by two fundamental laws: the Law of Three Forces or Principles called 'Triamazikamno', and the Law of Seven called 'Heptaparaparshinkh'. On these two laws are based other laws of the first, second and third order that in more details define the functioning of the Universe. We could include to these well-known laws, the laws of physics and chemistry, i.e. the law of thermodynamics or the law of the equivalence of mass and energy.

The Law of Three

According to the Law of Three, every event that arises on whatsoever scale at wherever place - from the atomic to the cosmic phenomena, including psychological manifestations - is the result of combination or interaction of three different forces or influences. The first force is called affirming, positive or active, the second force denying, negative or passive, and the third force reconciling, neutralising or uniting¹⁸⁵. Contemporary science confirms the existence of two opposing forces to generate some type of phenomena, e.g. force and resistance, positive and negative electric charges, but does not mention anything about the third force. We can easily identify and understand the operation of two opposite forces, but it is much more difficult to grasp the effect of the third parameter which is not apparent.

Let us try to illustrate this law using very simplified examples. In atomic structures there exist electrons with the negative electric charge and protons with the positive charge. To create an atom a third force is needed causing electrons to orbit the nucleus consisting of protons. In the justice system we have an accused and a prosecutor, but a judge is needed to pass sentence. In nature there exist male and female reproductive cells (gametes), but a third force is necessary to cause fertilisation.

At the root of the Law of Three is the existence of a 'driving' force that creates special conditions or agents enabling unification or neutralisation of the other two factors. The Law of Three exists from the beginning

of the Universe, and in some form or other is known to man since ancient times. It manifests itself in some religions e.g. as Trimurti: Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva in Hinduism, or as Holy Trinity in Christianity.

The Law of Seven

The Law of Seven controls the sequel of events and causes all phenomena to develop in a non-linear way, i.e. in each sequence of events there exist discontinuities and changes of direction. This explains why certain phenomena do not go on endlessly, but have their beginning and end. This law is formulated as follows:

"The flow of forces follows a line that constantly deflects at specific intervals and unites again at its ends. ' According to this primordial sacred cosmic law, the line of the flow of forces has seven points of deflection or, as is otherwise said, seven 'centres of gravity,' and the distance between two consecutive points of deflection, or 'centres of gravity,' is called a 'stopinder of the sacred Heptaparaparshinokh.'¹⁸⁶

One could say with great simplification that there is no physical or psychic force that would act incessantly in the same direction. The force acts in one direction only during a limited time and thereafter changes its intensity and course, or undergoes an internal change and is transformed into a different force.

The Law of Seven, called also the Law of Octave describes the existence and development of vibrations. Detailed explanations of this law are given by Ouspensky in his book "In Search of the Miraculous"¹⁸⁷, therefore here only the general outline is given, based on his book. Gurdjieff explained this principle to his students in this way:

" From this point of view, then, the world consists of vibrations and matter, or of matter in a state of vibration, of vibrating matter. The rate of vibration is inverse to the density of matter"¹⁸⁸...."In order to understand the meaning of this law it is necessary to regard the universe as consisting of vibrations. These vibrations proceed in all kinds, aspects and densities of the matter which constitutes the universe, from the finest to the coarsest; they issue from various sources and proceed in various directions, crossing one another, colliding, strengthening, weakening, arresting one another , and so on."¹⁸⁹

Such interpretation of matter is similar to the modern theories of physics that state that matter is a wave, and that waves could be treated as matter. It tells us that each wave is characterised by the frequency of its vibration and possesses a certain energy. We now know from the well-known Einstein equation $E = mc^2$ that matter can change into wave energy. It is interesting to notice that the vibration model of the Universe as had been proposed by Gurdjieff does not contravene the quantum physics theories as developed at the beginning of the 20th century.

To illustrate the Law of Seven Gurdjieff is using a music scale that consists of seven tones in one octave. The ratio of frequency of vibration of the first tone of the octave to the last tone is like one to two, e.g. for the middle C, corresponds to 256 and 512 vibrations per second. The musical scale is created by dividing

the octave into seven unequal parts, as shown in Table 2, where the ratio of frequency of one vibration to the previous vibration is given in column 3.

The difference in the pitch of two tones is called an interval. In the octave there are three values of intervals: 9/8, 10/9 and 16/15. The smallest interval 16/15 occurs between **mi** and **fa** and **si** and **do**. Because the separation between these tones is the smallest of all, there are no semitones between them. The idea of such a structure of the octave originated in antiquity. It is based on the cosmic Law of Seven that was known by the early schools and applied to music. The scale was documented by Pitagoras in 6 c. BC. The octave that is illustrating the functioning of the law of Seven could be presented in the form of forces acting along a line (Illustration 1.) The beginning of the operation of forces, or happening of an event, starts with **do** and follows to **re**, **mi** and so on. Two points, between **mi** and **fa**, and **si** and **do**, where the interval is smallest, i.e. 16/15, are called the places of retardation in the octave. At these points occur the changes of direction of the

Table 2
Structure of an octave

Ton	Ratio of the frequency of a tone to the frequency of tone do	Ratio of the frequencies of two tones (interval)	Frequency of a tone from the middle C
do	1		256
re	9/8	9/8	288
mi	5/4	10/9	320
fa	4/3	16/15	341.73
sol	3/2	9/8	384
la	5/3	10/9	416.66
si	13/8	9/8	480
do	2	16/15	512

lines of forces and are shown in Illustration 2. In the following octaves the deviation may increase to such an extent, that the force could change its direction, even by 180 or 360 degrees and return to the beginning¹⁹⁰. To prevent the change of direction of forces at the points of retardation it is necessary to apply a 'shock', which must have the right strength and the proper character. The shock must be strong enough to bring the line of forces back into the original direction. To apply such a shock it is necessary to have a good understanding of the Law of Seven and knowledge of the kind of shock that is required to achieve the original aim.

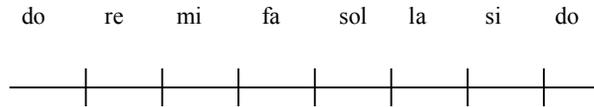


Illustration 1

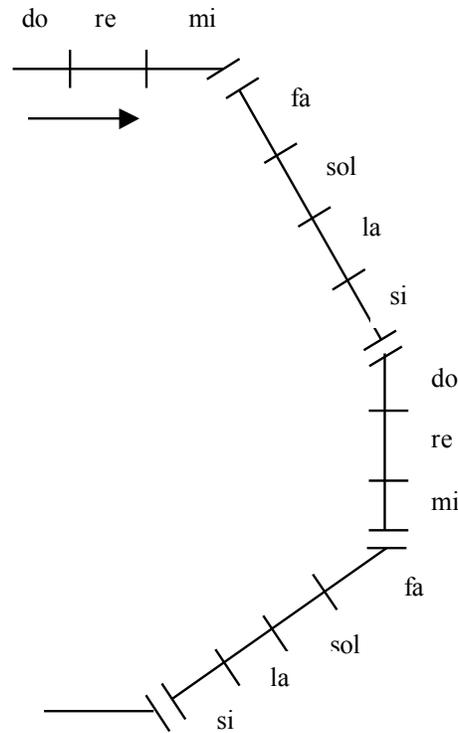


Illustration 2

The functioning of the Law of Seven can be observed, for example, in the activities of people. This law shows why, in spite of clear fixation on our proposed course of action and our final aim, we are slowly deviating and eventually we are doing the opposite what originally we planned to do. Man starts a certain work or study to achieve something. After a period of time, without any visible reason, our interest in our work is dwindling, our effort is decreasing and if a special shock is not applied, then our work input could change its direction or disappear altogether. This situation could repeat itself several times, and every time a special effort is needed to achieve the original target. Gurdjieff said that such a process applies to everything man undertakes. From the history of civilisations or from our personal experience we could see how democracies changed into tyrannies, the teaching of Christ into Inquisition, broad-mindedness into intolerance and love into hate. The Law of Octave explains many phenomena in man's lives. Besides the

principle of deviation of forces it explains the dynamics of changes, reveals why nothing in the world is stable, everything is changing, new things and situations arise, develop and die. The existence of this law is confirmed by the events of everyday life, in business, politics or religion.

The Ray of Creation

The Law of Three is the fundamental law of world creation. On the first level of creation three forces i.e. active, passive and neutralising, are needed. These three forces originated from the Unity which Gurdjieff calls the Absolute¹⁹¹. The Absolute has not been created, does not manifest its presence, and is not visible and cannot be comprehended by people. One could assume that it includes all worlds and astronomic systems, in summary everything, including God's will. The three forces originated from the Absolute in the first act of creation were conditioned only by the will of the Absolute and the mutual relationship between active, passive and neutralising forces. As a result of interaction of these forces a new world has been created. In this newly created world, the three forces are separated and are ruled by 3 laws, therefore it is called 'World 3'. In 'World 3' the Absolute creates a general plan for all the rest of the Universe, which is then further developed automatically. The will of the Absolute cannot manifest itself in subsequent worlds apart from this plan. Thus in the next phase of creation 'World 3' creates 'World 6' that is governed by 3 laws of 'World 3' and 3 new laws. Next, on the third level arises 'World 12' that is ruled by 9 already existing laws and 3 new laws. The process of creation is progressing downwards to lower levels in the same way adding always 3 new laws. This process can be summarised below:

Absolute, One will, Unity.

First level of creation, World 3, ruled by 3 laws.

Second level of creation, World 6, ruled by 6 laws.

Third level of creation, World 12, ruled by 12 laws.

Fourth level of creation, World 24, ruled by 24 laws.

Fifth level of creation , World 48 ruled by 48 laws.

Sixth level of creation , World 96, ruled by 96 laws.

This process originated from the Absolute and linked by the lines of forces down to the world on lower levels is called the Ray of Creation.

If we consider the Universe as it is visible to man from the standpoint of the Ray of Creation, then on the first level we find all worlds or galaxies; on the second level - the Milky Way; on the third level - The Sun; on the fourth - our planetary system; on the fifth - the Earth; on the sixth - the Moon. The Moon is the last point in this branch of the Universe that also includes the Earth and the Sun. The Ray of Creation determines our place in the Universe and makes us aware of how far is the Earth from the Absolute. This explains why the will of the Absolute does not reach us¹⁹².

To understand the relationship between the different worlds and the number of laws they are ruled by, let us use the analogy of army organisation. At the top is a field marshal, under him are generals, in turn, under each of them are colonels, and further down the pyramid come captains, sergeants, corporals and at the bottom - privates. The general receives orders from the marshal and passes them to the colonels, who will be adding their own orders. On each level new orders are generated and therefore the private receives the highest number. With the rank decreases the number of orders for the soldiers to follow, and in this structure the marshal obeys the smallest number of orders.

The described three original forces of creation are diverted from the Absolute down to the Ray of Creation and generate new forces that continue this process. Without the Law of Seven these forces would develop freely without any impediments. The Law of Seven states that in the Ray of Creation there exist two such obstructions. It is easier to understand this process if we present the Ray of Creation in the form of an octave, where the Absolute is the first **do**, the level of all worlds is **si**, the level of the Milky Way corresponds to **la**, and so on. The Octave of Creation is shown in Table 3.

From the Law of Octave that defines two retardations of vibrations between **do** and **si**, and **fa** and **mi** follows that in the Ray of Creation also exist two obstructions restraining the creation process. The Ray of Creation encounters the first obstruction between the Absolute and All Worlds. For the creation process to proceed a 'shock' is needed. This 'shock' comes from the Absolute itself and is the result of its will. The second obstruction exists between the level of the Planet and the Earth. The will of the Absolute does not reach so far and therefore something new must be created to generate the necessary 'shock'. For this purpose life on Earth has been created, in order to enable the further flow of forces. Biological life plays the role of helping to transmit the creative force down to the Earth and to the Moon. Man is a part of biological life, but he does not belong to the ray of Creation, and his role, as other organisms on Earth, is determined by Nature. The presented Ray of Creation is one of the almost infinite numbers of Rays that exist in the Universe. It is noticeable that in our Ray of Creation the position of Earth is far away from the Absolute. Showing this remote location of Earth, Gurdjieff continues with the attack that was started by Copernicus and focussed on the deeply rooted conviction that Earth plays a special role in the Universe. He does not hesitate to call our Solar System a small and poor formation, placed somewhere in the 'Siberia' of the Universe.

Man has to fulfil a special role as symbolised by the Ray of Creation. In this parallel the Ray of Creation illustrates the development of man's consciousness comparing it with the levels of different formations of the Universe. The Ray of Creation presents a notional development of man that is beginning with man Type One and is ending with man Type Seven. In this parallel, man Type One, is represented by the Moon as a basic biological organism, man Type Two by the Earth; man Type Three by the planets. These three types describe man as a part of the biological world fulfilling the role imposed on him by Nature. Distinguishing among these, man on the level of the Moon is most enslaved because he has to obey no less than 96 laws. In a better position is man on the level of the Earth, who is obeying 48 laws. However this parallel shows that man can reach higher levels. The first is the level of the Sun where man is subjected to 12 laws. Man Type Five is represented by the Milky Way and Type Six by All Worlds. The highest level that man could ever achieve is the level of the Absolute representing divine consciousness.

Table 3
The Ray of Creation

	Number of laws	Tone	Hydrogen	Man Type
Absolute	1	do	H6	Seven
First obstruction				
All Worlds	3	si	H12	Six
Milky Way	6	la	H24	Fife
Sun	12	sol	H48,H96	Four
Planets	24	fa	H192,H384	Three
Second obstruction				
Earth	48	mi	H768 - H3072	Two
Moon	96	re	H6144, H12288	One

Elements of energo-matter

As was already mentioned, in Gurdjieff's conception of cosmology everything, from the Absolute to the Moon consists of matter. Various matters, energies or formations of the Universe are called 'hydrogens' by Gurdjieff⁹³. This name has nothing in common with the element called Hydrogen, but describes the existence of energo-matter in the Universe. 'Hydrogens' have a symbolic meaning and help to understand complex relationship in the Universe and within man as well. 'Hydrogens' are identified by a series of numbers: 6,12, 24, ...till 12288. The Universe, determined by the Ray of Creation, consists of a series of

'hydrogens', shown in Table 3, beginning with 'hydrogen H6 in the Absolute and ending with 'hydrogen' H12288 in the Moon. The Absolute consists of the noblest matter having the highest level of energy, and the Moon includes the crudest matter, having the lowest level of energy.

'Hydrogens' relate also to various forms of man's energe-matter. 'Hydrogens' H6, H12, H24, H48 correspond to various forms of man's psychic and spiritual life, H96 represents the matter of animal magnetism and emanation from the human body, H192 represents air, H384 water, H768 man's food, H1536 organic matter and H3072 inorganic matter. Using the same numbers of 'hydrogens' in man as in the Universe, Gurdjieff shows that man is built in the same way as the Cosmos.

Gurdjieff presents man as a complex 'factory' transforming 'hydrogens'. For normal functioning man does need not only 'hydrogens' H192, H384 and H768, but also H48 - defined as received impressions. Man has possibilities of transforming received 'hydrogens' into higher 'hydrogens', i.e. H48, H24, H12. The effectiveness of transformation of 'hydrogens' depends to a large extent on man's level of consciousness and the work on his development¹⁹⁴.

'Hydrogen' H96 is also linked with the psychological stamina and the internal strength responsible for our frame of mind and protection against mental and physical diseases. Negative emotions, fear or depression hamper the creation of H96, and the state of identification could completely destroy it. Contact with a person having substantial quantities of H96 could give us energy, however involvement with a person who is full of hate or envy could deplete our energy. H96 can be transformed by us into H48. 'Hydrogen' H48 is used by the intellectual centre, thus if we do not have enough H96, then very little H48 will be created. In such a situation a person is unable to concentrate and think. In extreme cases this could result in a breakdown¹⁹⁵.

At the next level of transformation from H48 is produced H24, which is the source of energy for the emotional centre. From H24 is generated H12 that is used in the sex centre. Since H12 depends on the quantities of H24, therefore when H24 is used up, for example, by our negative emotions, this will have a strong effect on our sex life. The amount of created H12-H96 depends not only on our mental state, but could be the result of such a simple fact as lack of sufficient quantities of H768 - correct food, or H192 - fresh air.

Gurdjieff's system of 'hydrogens' helps to explain the functioning of the complex psycho-physical system of man. According to him, listed 'hydrogens' exert an equally important influence on the functioning of man, something that is still not fully recognised by present science^a.

^a Some results of scientific research show that the behaviour of children could be affected by the type of food eaten.

System of governing of the Universe

Before the creation of the present Universe, the functioning of the Sun Absolute was based on two primordial sacred laws, the Law of Three and the Law of Seven, acting independently without any influences from outside. Gurdjieff called this system 'Autoegocret' - meaning 'I keep everything under my control'. To prevent destruction of the Sun Absolute as a result of the action of Heropass, the Creator changed the functioning of these two laws and directed the action of their forces into the space of the Universe.¹⁹⁶ Consequently, maintenance of the Sun Absolute become dependent on external forces, and the Creator introduced other structures as described in the Ray of Creation. This required a new control system of the Universe and a new system was created called 'Trogoautoegocrat'- which means 'eating myself, I am maintained'. Through this system the Universe is mutually maintained as a result will last for ever. We do not know the rules governing this system, but from astronomical observation we could deduce that this is a dynamic system which is continuously changing. We already know that certain stars disappear and new ones are created, therefore it is not the system that is shrinking or dying. What is driving this process will remain a mystery. On the scale of Earth it is easier to comprehend the system of 'reciprocal maintenance'. We can observe, that in this huge ecological system some organisms, e.g. plants, transform and store solar energy, producing it for their own needs and those of other beings. There exists a long and complex chain of food dependency of one being on others, starting from the most primitive bacteria and ending with man. In this chain one kind of being provides food for other beings, including man. In this way there is a closed circle of reciprocal support.

Chapter 9

The life and teaching of Gurdjieff^a

The life and figure of Gurdjieff is a great unknown to everyone. Gurdjieff did not have a habit of talking about himself, and nobody dared to ask him about his life story. He disclosed information about himself only when certain concepts of his teaching needed to be illustrated, and therefore we can never be sure if the stories told by him were true and were referring to his life. Therefore we have to distinguish between the material provided by Gurdjieff himself, and the information confirmed by independent witnesses. Even his date of birth is not certain. The passport entry was 1877, British Encyclopaedia gives 1872, Nansen's passport states 1864, but Gurdjieff himself confirmed in 1943 that he was 78. His childhood memories show that he remembered well certain events from 1872-3, when his father lost all his cattle herds, therefore 1866 is the most likely year of his birth.¹⁹⁷ About the early years of Gurdjieff's life we know everything and nothing. What we do know came from himself and there are no independent sources^b confirming this information. Therefore the main source of data about his pre-teaching period is his book "Meeting with Remarkable Man"¹⁹⁸ and brief remarks directed to his students about his explorations and travelling.

Childhood

Gurdjieff was born in Alexandropol (present Gumri) in Russian Armenia. His mother was Armenian and his father was of Greek origin. His father was a relatively rich man who had inherited herds of cattle, but he relished being an 'ashokh' or a bardic poet and he loved telling old myths and legends, stories from 'One Thousand and One Nights' or stories of Mullah Nassr Eddin^c. The boy was brought up in a traditional patriarchal household, where everybody had their own place.

When in 1873 a cattle plague exterminated his father's herds, the family's and his own life completely changed. His father lost all his fortune, had to sell his personal belongings and open a lumber-yard.

From his earliest days his grandmother had a great influence on him. On her death bed she gave him important advice that shaped his life: "Eldest of my grandsons! Listen and always remember my strict injunction to you: In life never do as others do. Either do nothing - just go to school -or do something nobody else does."¹⁹⁹.

^a Information included in this chapter is based on the book by J. Moore "Gurdjieff - a biography".

^b Gurdjieff's family had not provided any significant information about his life.

^c A legendary jester and story teller personifying folk wisdom.

In 1877, when Tsar Alexander, after a brief war won a victory over the Turks, Gurdjieff moved with his family to the newly conquered town of Kars, where his father opened a carpenter's workshop. Kars was on the crossroads of movement of many ethnic groups. Besides Russian it was filled by of Aisors, Tartars, Kurds and wanderers from as far away as Moldavia and Estonia. It was a good training ground for a young boy. He already knew several languages as used in this part of the world such as Armenian, Turko-Tartar, and he learnt Greek, Russian and Turkish.²⁰⁰

The standard of schools in Kars, especially Greek and Armenian was very low, therefore he was sent to a little bit better Russian school. It was lucky for him that he had a good voice and was accepted to the choir at the Kars Military cathedral, and there he was noticed by Dean Borsh, a very remarkable person. Borsh very soon noticed something exceptional and took interest in the boy. In 1879, when the boy's future was being considered, his parents wanted him to become a priest, Borsh suggested medicine, but Gurdjieff wanted to be an engineer. They all agreed that the school in Kars was very poor and decided to educate the boy privately. The Dean taught him mathematics, chemistry and astronomy, and other subjects were covered, following Borsh's orders, by young deacons.²⁰¹ Gurdjieff studied not only school subjects, but he also spent some time in the army hospital where he picked up some knowledge of anatomy and physiology. At that time he knew several languages and had been reading many books borrowed from his tutors.

At a very early age he came into contact with death in his family. When he was fifteen, his eldest sister who was closest to him, died. It was a great loss and shock for him. Soon afterwards he was himself accidentally shot and narrowly escaped death; he discovered that this event had been predicted by a fortune-teller. These and other inexplicable events deepened his interest in mystical and supernatural phenomena, but he found it difficult to accept the explanations of the educated local people.

From this period he remembered well a special incident. It was a 'duel' with a suitor for the attention of a girl. The boys decided to hide in a crater on the artillery range during the practice with live ammunition and wait until one of them was killed. Gurdjieff came out of this duel unhurt, but it was an overwhelming and unusual experience. His feeling of self-awareness and fear of death had completely changed his value of life.

Search

In 1883 he moved to Tiflis, where he started work on the railway yard. Gurdjieff's father hoped that he would study in a famous Georgian Seminar in Echmiadzin, but he himself has not mentioned anything about this. Ouspensky said that he noticed in Gurdjieff's mother's room a photograph of Gurdjieff who was wearing the robe of a priest of the Russian Orthodox Church, so it is possible that the boy had studied there.

During this time he made a pilgrimage to the holy city of Echmiadzin and met two people who had similar interests and with whom he could share his problems - Sarkis Pogossian and Abram Yelov. He met

Pogossian, who had finished his studies in the Theological Seminar of Echmiadzin and was waiting to obtain a parish.

During this period Gurdjieff tried to formulate his outlook upon life and tried to discover the purpose of life, especially of man, on Earth. Together with Pogossian he arrived at the conclusion that there exists sacred knowledge and wisdom that was known by people in ancient times, but that this knowledge had become lost and forgotten. They both realised that the key to this knowledge would not be found in modern literature or science, but in antiquity.

Why was Gurdjieff so much interested in this knowledge? He treated life on Earth as a great riddle that could not be comprehended by man's mind. Was there anything similar in the Universe? When and how did life start on Earth? How could science, religion and the creation myths be reconciled? What is the purpose of life? When did life begin to be a carrier of consciousness? ²⁰²

These and other tantalising questions were the main driving force pushing Gurdjieff to search for the answers, to travel through deserts and mountains, to search for the sources of ancient knowledge. These questions then, as still today, have only reluctantly been considered by the majority of society because one part believes in Darwin's mechanistic theory of evolution that removed the purpose of life's existence, the other part accepts religious explanations in support of their faith.

When Gurdjieff was twenty, he went with Pogossian to the ancient city of Ani^a, where in the ruins of a monastery they found several ancient Armenian parchments. In one of them the 'Sarmoung Brotherhood' was mentioned, which has been an Aisorian school in the 7th century AD. The school was credited with the possession of ancient knowledge that had originated in Babylon and Sumer more than 4 thousands years ago, providing the key to many esoteric mysteries and secrets. To find the Brotherhood and to learn its knowledge became the main goal of Gurdjieff's life. About his further adventures we know very little. What is certain that he travelled extensively, a fact that has been confirmed by his brother's family living in Tiflis. Usually after a long expedition he had been returning to his brother Dmitri to recover from various afflictions or even bullet wounds²⁰³. One can be sure that he led an extraordinary and very dangerous life.

The goal - finding the Sarmoung Brotherhood - made him a nomad and a tireless wanderer. This style of living did not allow him to enjoy family life. Gurdjieff was deeply concerned that hidden through centuries somewhere in Asia, the esoteric knowledge of the Sarmoung Brotherhood would disappear under the tidal wave of social and technical changes of the Western Civilization. In fifty or a hundred years, the remaining old customs and knowledge would be lost for ever.

In *Meetings with Remarkable Men* Gurdjieff writes about his journeys in the company of engineers, doctors, priests, princes, extraordinary and remarkable men, distinguished by their knowledge and resourcefulness, driven by common passion and interest. This group of travellers, assembled around

^a Former capital of the Bagratid kings of Armenia.

Gurdjieff in 1895, was called the Seekers of Truth. Their main aim was to study old customs, literature, architecture, and to conduct experiments, observations and to provide mutual help. This group consisted of about fifteen men and one woman - Vitvitskaia. Gurdjieff's friends Pogossian, Yelov and Karpenko belonged to the core of this group, others, specialists in archaeology, astronomy, engineering, mining, music and philology joined some expeditions. The travellers crossed deserts, mountains and reached inaccessible places. All this information is provided by Gurdjieff in his book Meetings with Remarkable Men. There are no witnesses or documents, to confirm that these events did take place. It is impossible to identify independently members of his group or verify their travelling routes.

It is possible to treat descriptions of the activities of the Seekers of Truth as parallel to the work of a self-development group. The group must have the necessary skills and willpower to carry out their set tasks. They have to face extraordinary difficulties and dangers, more of a psychological nature than physical. For example, crossing the Gobi desert on stilts during a sandstorm could be interpreted as a need for a member of the group to be above the upheavals that have been brought about by daily life.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Gurdjieff travelled to the most important place for him - Tibet. In 1901 in Upper Tibet he studied the Tibetan language, rituals, dance and psychic techniques. These studies were 'interrupted' by a 'stray' bullet that almost killed him. After recovering from the wounds, he returned to Tibet to witness a British invasion led by colonel Francis Younghusband, and annihilation of the almost medieval Tibetan army. After his Tibetan adventure he travelled widely and in 1905 arrived in Tashkent, where he studied and carried out extensive business activities.

Had he found what he was searching for? He claimed to have found and studied in the monastery of the Sarmoung Brotherhood. Unfortunately we do not know where this monastery was, because Gurdjieff promised to keep the secret. Had he really found I, as he claimed, or should we treat the story as an parable. Gurdjieff promised to publish more information in his book, but he has never done it. Maybe he wanted this to remain a mystery.

Worldly life

To find the funds for his expeditions and other activities Gurdjieff used his business acumen. He collected antiques, Persian carpets and Chinese porcelain. He traded almost everything, from herrings to crude oil. These business activities gave him independence and enabled him not only to travel extensively, but also helped him at a later stage in his life to finance his teaching activities.

We know that he travelled widely, from Egypt to Mongolia and India. How could he reach the most inaccessible places? Sometimes he himself threw light on it: "I had, in accordance with the peculiar conditions of my life, the possibility of gaining access to the so-called "holy-of-holiest" of nearly all hermetic organisations such as religious, philosophical, occult, political and mystic societies, congregations,

parties, unions, etc., which were inaccessible to the ordinary man, and of discussing and exchanging views with innumerable people who, in comparison with others, are real authorities."²⁰⁴

This could suggest that he was involved with the secret service. There were rumours that he was an agent in the Russian secret police. We know that he followed the rule that 'the end justifies the means'. He said that he had been presented to Tsar Nicholas II in 1901, probably in recognition of his secret work. One could assume that there must be some truth in it, because when he arrived in 1920 in Constantinople, he was targeted by the British secret service. This could be connected with a dossier from New Delhi referring to the secret work of Gurdjieff as carried out in Tibet during the period of intensive Russian secret service activities, who were then trying to gain influence in this part of the world.

Was Gurdjieff emotionally involved with any cause, organisation or idea? Probably not, but we know that he was in contact with Armenian and Greek secret organisations who were fighting for independence. Once he said: " It was all the same to me how I got there, whether on the devil's back or even arm-in -arm with the priest".²⁰⁵ We know very little about his private life. From his allusions we could guess that it was a life full of adventures, various kinds of excesses, including alcoholism.

Turning point

1908 was a crucial year in his life, because for the first time he had started to consider teaching. Up to now he was searching and learning, and in over 20 years of his study he had attained extensive knowledge, technical skills and became familiar with various theories and ideas. The purpose of his life was changing because he came to the conclusion that he had understood the importance and the purpose of man's life on Earth. He felt that the responsibility for the transmission of the acquired knowledge was left on his shoulders. On 13 September 1911 Gurdjieff made a solemn promise to lead an " absolutely unnatural life, absolutely irreconcilable, too, in every way with the traits that had entrenched themselves in my individuality by the time of my maturity".²⁰⁶ He had decided to hide his personality, so it would not interfere with his main objective - teaching.

Marriage

Soon after arriving in Moscow in 1912 he had married a 22 year old Polish girl, Julia Ostrowska. Gurdjieff was very attached to his wife, provided care for her and gave her a secure position, and she accompany him faithfully through the war, revolution and emigration. Julia Ostrowska was an exceptional woman with special qualities, emanating gentleness and visible authority. Although she was not a member of his group she played a leading role in the performances of his sacred dances. The earlier years of her life are shrouded in mystery that was never breached by him or her. There was a feeling that Gurdjieff helped her or even saved her in a difficult period of her life.

Possibly, the figure of Vitvitskaia, described in "Meetings with Remarkable Man", is based on her life story. Vitvitskaia, like Julia Ostrowska, was Polish. She was born in the Volyne province in Eastern Poland, where her father was a superintendent on the estate near Rovno. Her mother died when she was young and she was brought up with her siblings by her aunt. Her father died when she was fourteen, after him died her aunt. She moved with her sister to Odessa where they learnt to be dressmakers. Vitvitskaia was very attractive and had many admirers. One of them, a commercial traveller, took her to St Petersburg and then deserted her. She led the life of a courtesan, but luckily her younger brother found her a position as a governess with the family of the Russian Consul in Alexandria. During her journey to Egypt she met prince Lubovedsky and Gurdjieff who offered her help. Eventually she joined the "Seekers of Truth" and took part in their expeditions. Is this the life story of Julia Ostrowska? Unfortunately we will never be fully sure of it. However Gurdjieff had written this about Vitvitskaia: "Recalling her now, when I have already passed half-way mark of my life and have been in almost all countries and seen thousands of women, I must confess that I never met and probably never will meet another such woman".²⁰⁷ He wrote this in 1928, after the death of his wife, therefore it is possible that this is a posthumous commemoration of her life, because he had held only her in such a high esteem.

The beginning of teaching

Gurdjieff arrived in Russia at a period of unrest. The Russian society, shaken by the 1905 revolution and the lost war with Japan, was interested in all kinds of mystic experiences, therefore Gurdjieff found here favourable conditions for his theories. We know very little about his first years in Russia. It is known that he had bought 3 properties: a flat in Moscow, another one in St Petersburg and a dacha near Moscow. Where were his funds coming from? It appears that he brought with him to Moscow a large collection of various antiques, precious carpets and a collection of Chinese porcelain.²⁰⁸ So obviously his personal fortune was very substantial.

In Moscow, the first famous Russian pupil who joined Gurdjieff's group was Vladimir Pohl, a talented composer and a director of the Empress Maria Musical Institute. Under his influence Gurdjieff's cousin, the sculptor Sergei Mercourov, who had passed into the history books as a creator of Lenin and Stalin monuments, became a member of the group .

In 1913, when Gurdjieff had several Russian students, he acquired his first foreign pupil - an Englishman - Paul Dukes, who was a music student at the St Petersburg Conservatoire, and a British secret agent. The first follower who stayed with Gurdjieff for many years was Dr. Leon Stjoernal, a well known psychiatrist. Phlegmatic, honest, reliable with a scientific outlook, he was a very trustworthy person.

The most important pupil who joined Gurdjieff at this time was, without any doubt Piotr Ouspensky, who in the future would play a very important role in spreading Gurdjieff's teaching. In November 1914 Ouspensky noticed in the newspaper a note about a new mystic ballet "The Struggle of the Magician" that

had been prepared by Gurdjieff, but he had not attempted to get in touch with him. Ouspensky was then a well-known writer and publicist, much well received in the intellectual circles of Moscow and St Petersburg. In 1912 he published his major work "Tertium Organum", that he considered to be the continuation of Aristotle's 'Organon' and Bacon's 'Novum Organum'. When in April 1915 Ouspensky arrived in Moscow, Gurdjieff tried to arrange a meeting with him. At that time the social position of Gurdjieff was much lower than that of Ouspensky, therefore he needed Pohl's and Mercourov's help to finalised the meeting.

The meeting was arranged in a small back street café, where normally Ouspensky would not have set foot. Gurdjieff presented himself in the worst light, what he had been doing deliberately during the first meetings, to check the abilities of his potential students. Gurdjieff spoke poor Russian, but in spite of this he seized the initiative. Ouspensky assumed a careful attitude to Gurdjieff and his ideas, anticipating a mixture of superstition, occultism and nonsense. Later he wrote about the meeting: " My first meeting with him entirely changed my opinion of him and of what I might expect from him"²⁰⁹ Ouspensky sensed the unusual and mysterious personality of Gurdjieff and was not put off by the external requisites and Gurdjieff's acting.

Ouspensky was not easily influenced, nor was he inclined to accept the authority of others. He himself was uncompromising and fearless, what very soon came to light and was leading to conflicts with Gurdjieff. Already during the first meeting Ouspensky knew that he wanted to meet Gurdjieff again and become his student. After a few meetings Gurdjieff accepted him as his pupil, but their mutual contacts were very limited, because Ouspensky lived in St Petersburg. Gurdjieff then directed his attention to St Petersburg and decided to give several lectures there.

Ouspensky organised for him audiences using his personal contacts and influence. He hired halls or arranged meetings in private houses of prominent people. Interest in Gurdjieff's ideas was so extensive, that from January 1916 he had been coming to St Petersburg every fortnight. During the next six months Gurdjieff presented to his followers the basic ideas and canons of his teaching that he had gathered for over 25 years. In August 1916 the St Petersburg group consisted of about thirty students and made substantial progress in assimilating the provided theory. Ouspensky had secretly been taking notes that would form the core of his book "In Search of the Miraculous" that would later play a leading role in popularising Gurdjieff's ideas.

In the autumn the St Petersburg group was joined by one of the most important pupils from this period - Thomas de Hartmann. He was a musician, composer and an officer of the Imperial Guards. A sensitive, refined aristocrat, he belonged to the kind of people who were searching for something higher above the daily life. His wife Olga, who had also joined the group was destined to play, for the next 13 years, a key role in helping Gurdjieff in his mundane tasks as his secretary and confidant. Olga, an attractive and intelligent woman, a great-granddaughter of Kaiser Wilhelm I from a morganatic relation, had an operatic

voice and spoke five languages. From this time Olga and Thomas de Hartmann, cast their lot with Gurdjieff and accompanied him for many years.

Period of the revolution

The situation in Russia was deteriorating very rapidly. The lost war with Germany, the assassination of Rasputin, the mutiny of the army in St Petersburg, were all indications that the Tsarist regime would collapse. Anticipating further political developments, Gurdjieff left St Petersburg for Moscow, and after the abdication of Tsar Nicolas II moved to his parents in Alexandropol. He had intended to return to St Petersburg, but as a result of the political situation he changed his mind and settle in Essentuki, a small town at the foothills of Mount Elbrus. Soon afterwards Ouspensky arrived there with a group of twelve pupils from Moscow and St Petersburg and they started very intensive practical work that lasted for about six weeks. Ouspensky wrote about this: "I always have a very strange feeling when I remember this period. On this occasion we spent about six weeks in Essentuki. But this now seems to be altogether incredible. Whenever I chance to speak with any one of those who were there they can hardly believe that it lasted only six weeks. It would be difficult even in six years to find room for everything that was connected with this time, to such an extent was it filled."²¹⁰

Here Gurdjieff showed them a new exercise that required everybody to freeze on a command 'stop'. Pupils had not only to stay still, but also to keep the same tension of the muscles as it was when they heard the command. If a person could not keep the upright position he should fall like a bag without protecting himself. This exercise was practised in the most unexpected moments, e.g. when somebody was drinking hot tea and could not put the cup down, or was inhaling a cigarette. It was important not to miss the command, not to anticipate it and select a more comfortable position, to observe the tension of the muscles, to overcome sometimes a strong pain. It was an exercise of attention, concentration, thinking, feeling and body movement.

At the end of August Gurdjieff announced that he was moving to Tuapse on the Black Sea coast. He took with him de Hartmanns, but he did not invite Ouspensky. His relationship with Ouspensky was visibly deteriorating. Gurdjieff realised that Ouspensky had attained good knowledge and understanding of the presented theories, but that he had unfortunately reached the limits of his development. On the other hand, Ouspensky was unable to accept Gurdjieff's domination and he questioned Gurdjieff's methods of teaching.

In December 1917 Gurdjieff decided to move back to Essentuki, where he was joined by about forty students. Dr. Stjoernal with his wife and Ouspensky also arrived there. To his lectures Gurdjieff added movements, dervish dances and breathing exercises. During this time it came to the final break between Gurdjieff and Ouspensky who moved to a separate house and started writing. From this point of time onwards Ouspensky would begin to promote and teach Gurdjieff's theories independently, often not

mentioning their origins. He had not broken contacts with the master, but he had not considered himself as a Gurdjieff student any more.

In July 1918 Gurdjieff's family arrived from Alexandropol. When in May 1918 the Turks attacked Armenia, Gurdjieff's father was killed while defending his home. It was terrible news for Gurdjieff, and although he never incited against the Turks, it was one of the reasons why he hated all wars.

While living in Essentuki Gurdjieff took care of all his family and even his distant relatives, and of all those who were connected with him. During the revolution many people did not have any means to survive and were totally dependent on his help, so altogether he supported about 150 persons. Although Gurdjieff had a substantial fortune before the revolution, very little remained, and he decided to take drastic measures. All his pupils had to sign a document relinquishing their private possessions, money and jewellery.

Although life in Essentuki, under the Bolshevik rule, was relatively quiet, it was the calm before the storm. Gurdjieff anticipated possible events and was getting ready for departure. In order not to raise any suspicions, he asked the Bolsheviks for a permit to organise a 'scientific' expedition to find gold in the mountains. Surprisingly he obtained the permit and the necessary supplies. The expedition included only the closest and most trusted people: Thomas and Olga de Hartmann, Dr. Stjoernval with wife, Zhukov, Zackarov, altogether 12 adults and 2 children. The expedition left on 6 August 1918 almost at the last moment. Three weeks later bloody terror swept Essentuki and many officers and members of the intelligentsia were shot.

After a train journey to Maikop, they started a long and dangerous track through the mountains. For the members of the expedition it was the next lesson in how to cope in difficult situations, how to find the energy for extraordinary efforts, how to survive. The group, after the adventurous journey, arrived in Sochi in September, and almost immediately broke up. Only two couples, de Hartmanns and Stjoernvals, stayed with Gurdjieff. One could ask what was the purpose of this expedition? Was this the necessary escape or rather the final test and selection. With Gurdjieff remained only the most faithful, the strongest, who had decided to sacrifice everything for the 'cause'. Soon the situation in Sochi was getting dangerous and in January 1919 Gurdjieff with his followers sailed to Poti, and from there travelled by train to Tbilisi.

In Georgia the Menshevik government still stayed in power. It was almost the last oasis of peace in this land of upheaval. Tbilisi was full of refugees from Moscow and St Petersburg. Thomas de Hartmann taught in the Conservatoire of Advanced Musical Studies and conducted an orchestra. Olga sang in the Opera House. On the surface life looked like in St Petersburg. Gurdjieff started teaching of the sacred dances and he had drawn into the work Jeanne Salzmans, who had studied dance before the war at the Institute of Emile Jaques-Dalcroze in Hellerau in Germany. She was passionate about the dance, but during the time of war she could not fulfil her interest. Her husband Alexandre was an outstanding scenographer, inventor and artist, an associate of Rilke and Kandinsky. The Salzmans belonged to people of high intelligence and

culture with strong personalities, yet in Tbilisi Gurdjieff snatched them into his work and transformed their lives.

With the help of Jeanne Salzman Gurdjieff started teaching movements and rhythmic, and in June the school gave the first public performance of the Sacred Dances. In September 1919 had been prepared plans for the opening of a permanent centre of teaching - the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man. The group was joined by many new students. One of them was Olgivanna- a talented dancer, the daughter of an aristocrat from Montenegro. The group started preparation on the production of a ballet - The Struggle of the Magician. Gurdjieff in the midst of these activities was watching the political situation, because he realised that the Georgian government of the Mensheviks would soon collapse. Already the area north of the Caucasus was taken over by the Bolsheviks who ruled by terror. When in April 1920 the Red Army took over the Caspian port Baku, there remained only one way out of there - to the west. Gurdjieff closed his Institute, and with a group of about thirty followers moved to Batoumi, and then to Constantinople where he arrived on 7 June.

Constantinople

From this moment onwards there began a new chapter in the development of the Gurdjieff movement. Constantinople was only a transition point and served to prepare the next phase of activities. It was a cosmopolitan city, full of refugees from Russia, also Greeks, Armenians and English and French officials and soldiers. Gurdjieff did not waste time and opened his Institute of the Harmonious Development of Man, and started working with his students. Ouspensky, who had arrived earlier was already very active. He started teaching Gurdjieff theories and had his own group of pupils.

In January 1921 Gurdjieff was invited to a dinner by Prince Sabaheddin - a member of the highest Turkish aristocracy^a. Gurdjieff knew the Prince very well and between 1908 and 1912 he had met him several times. At the dinner was also a Captain John Bennett - a head of the Military Intelligence Office in Constantinople, who had received a dossier from New Delhi describing Gurdjieff as a 'dangerous Russian agent'. Gurdjieff did not know that Bennett's mistress, Mrs. Beaumont, who was also at the dinner knew Ouspensky and had provided a room for his meetings. However she did not know that Ouspensky's teaching had anything to do with Gurdjieff. The meeting with Gurdjieff had made a great impact on Bennett and as a result of it he would be playing an important role in spreading Gurdjieff's ideas for the next fifty years.

In December 1920 Gurdjieff, owing to Alexandre Salzman's connections, received an invitation from Jacques-Dalcroze to settle in Hellerau near Dresden. The interest in Gurdjieff's teaching in Constantinople was fading, therefore he decided to move to Germany.

^a His father was Mahmud Pasha and his mother was a sister of Sultan Abdul Hamid.

At the same time Ouspensky had received an invitation from London, where Lady Rothermere, wife of a newspaper magnate, supported him and financed his stay. Ouspensky had his own plans. He was keen to teach Gurdjieff's theories, but he did not want to be in his shadow. He wanted to write a book presenting the ideas he had learnt. His only defeat was the fact that his wife Sophie had decided to stay in Constantinople in the Gurdjieff group. Her reply to her husband arguments was: "I do not pretend to understand Georgy Ivanovitch. For me he is X. All that I know is that he is my teacher and it is not right for me to judge him, nor is it necessary for me to understand him. No one knows who is the real Georgy Ivanovitch, for he hides himself from all of us. It is useless for us to try to know him, and I refuse to enter into any discussion about him"²¹¹.

Germany and England

In August 1921 Gurdjieff with his closest followers arrived in Berlin. Alexandre Salzman with his extensive contacts had helped him to find a place for his Institute, and the brothers Dohrn had offered him a building in Hellerau for his usage. Olga de Hartmann with her fluent German accompanied Gurdjieff as his translator and secretary.

During this time Gurdjieff's attention turned towards London, where interest in his ideas propagated by Ouspensky was genuine and much larger than in Germany. Ouspensky based his teaching on the notes secretly taken between 1915 and 1918. Although he never denied that the presented theories had originated from Gurdjieff, he did not advertise this either. The truth came out when Bechhofer-Roberts published a book "In Denikin's Russia". He had met Gurdjieff in Tbilisi and described him as a mystic person. In this way the English pupils of Ouspensky had learnt about Gurdjieff and after this insisted on inviting the master to London²¹².

We know very little about Gurdjieff's stay in London, and Ouspensky has not disclosed anything about the visit. We know that on 13 February 1922 Gurdjieff gave a lecture that was attended by many prominent personalities and Ouspensky's patrons. It was attended, among others, by Alfred Orage, a publisher and editor of the periodical *New Age*. This weekly review, which had been published since 1907, had exerted a great influence on the shaping of English contemporary writing. Orage knew many influential and prominent people in politics and literature, and he was the type of person who could help to spread Gurdjieff's ideas. Besides literature and philosophy he was interested in hermetic teaching and self-development. He was convinced that there existed a secret primordial knowledge, which was used by prophets and philosophers. To acquire this knowledge he was prepared to undertake any difficult and unpleasant labours. After meeting Gurdjieff he knew that he had found what he was looking for.

After the enthusiastic reception by the London Ouspensky group, plans were being considered for bringing Gurdjieff to England. During his second visit in March 1922 it came to the official breakdown of relations between Ouspensky and Gurdjieff. Gurdjieff questioned Ouspensky's qualification to teach his ideas,

because not only he did not know the movements and the practical exercises, but mainly because Ouspensky lacked the essential human warmth and compassion necessary for helping students during their difficult moments while working on self-development. The last nail to the coffin was a public confrontation during a lecture on 15 March. Ouspensky, till his death bed, never forgave Gurdjieff his attack on him in front of his pupils.

The question who was going to teach in London came out into the open. Ouspensky was humiliated when almost all his pupils opted out for Gurdjieff. Preparations were on the way to arrange the move of the Gurdjieff group to London. Lady Rothermere would provide funds and Orage began working on publicity. Everything depended on granting permission to settle by the Home Office. Gurdjieff's anti-Bolshevik attitude was well known, but information from the India Office about Gurdjieff's old anti-British activities in Tibet became a decisive factor and the visa was refused^a.

In the mean time the situation in Germany had changed. The brothers Dohrn wanted their buildings back and started a case in court. The verdict was unfavourable for Gurdjieff who had been depicted by the press in a negative light. The interest in his teaching in Germany was very small and his financial situation was getting difficult. The decision was made to move to France, and on 14 July 1922 the whole Gurdjieff group arrived in Paris.

Prieuré des Basses Loges

Ouspensky and Lady Rothermere likewise arrived in Paris and asked Gurdjieff for permission to teach his theories in England. For a significant financial support Gurdjieff had acceded, and Ouspensky had got what he wanted, and was at last independent of Gurdjieff. Chance had decided that Gurdjieff would settle in France and Ouspensky in England, but through an irony of fate the logic and formal approach of Ouspensky was more French, while the sense of humour, common sense and eccentricity that was characteristic of Gurdjieff was more English. This division was unfavourable for Gurdjieff because for more than 25 years he had been completely cut-off from his English followers and interest in his teaching in France was minimal.

A very urgent task was to find a suitable location for the Institute. Olga de Hartmann found in August an ideal place- Prieuré des Basses Loges - forty miles from Paris near Fontainebleau. It was a three story building that could accommodate at least a hundred students and was surrounded by a 45 acres pine forest, being part of a 200 acres estate. A decision was made and for 65,000 francs a lease was arranged, with an option to buy everything for 700,000 francs.

^a According to an unconfirmed story visa had been promised to Gurdjieff, but had been refused to other members of his group.

Scarcely had he unpacked his suitcases, when Katherine Mansfield arrived, a well known writer, who had been recommended by Orage. She was at the pinnacle of her career, but had suffered from incurable pulmonary tuberculosis and doctors gave her only three months to live. Gurdjieff took care of her and accepted her wholeheartedly into his family. In spite of all the care Mansfield died on 9 January 1923. Her death triggered an invasion of various reporters and special correspondents. They were looking for sensations and mysteries. Prieuré was called 'an asylum for the insane', Gurdjieff was painted as a 'psychic shark' and magician. Katherine's husband almost blamed Gurdjieff for her death.

At the Prieuré began a 'normal' life. It was filled with work, lectures and exercises. Pupils worked in the kitchen, garden, were taking care of animals, constructing new buildings or improving the existing facilities. The first job was to build a Turkish bath that became a central place of rest and relaxation. Gurdjieff did not employ any craftsmen. He designed everything himself and instructed his pupils how to carry out various tasks. Everybody had to work, for example, when Orage arrived, who, as most of the pupils, was not used to any physical work, he described his chores in this way: "My first weeks at the Prieuré were weeks of real suffering. I was told to dig, and as I had had no real exercise for years I suffered so much physically that I would go back to my room, a sort of cell, and literally cry with fatigue."²¹³

Maurice Nicoll, a prominent doctor from Harley Street, worked as a kitchen help, rising at 4.30 am to start boilers and to wash up hundreds of plates. Besides the physical work everybody attended lectures and took part in movements and other exercises. The working day was long and exhausting, beginning at 6.00 am and ending at midnight.

One of the new investments in the Prieuré was a Study House. Gurdjieff bought the skeleton of a Zeppelin hangar from French Air Forces and in 6 weeks it was transformed, with great effort into a building 30 m long and 13 m wide. It contained an exercise hall and stage, and could provide seating space for 300 people. The walls and floors were covered with Persian carpets, and at the entrance there were two pools with fishes and a fountain. All this made an unforgettable impression.

In May 1923 Gurdjieff bought a new huge Citroen and started his long love affair with the motor car. He had not considered that he should take any driving lessons and learn this skill like others. After a few days of trials he drove like a daredevil, not bothering about other cars on the roads, recklessly overtaking buses and trucks.²¹⁴ This style of driving had to finish badly, and one night in late autumn, he almost killed himself on a road through the forest of Fontainebleau.

Conquest of America

To find new students and to secure residence in the Prieuré it was necessary to try new pastures. Gurdjieff was cut off from the new students in England, and he could not find any interested students in France, therefore only the States could be considered as a possible expansion area. He also planned to collect money organising display of Sacred Dances and movements. He sent to the States Orage and Dr. Stjoernal to

pave the way. In the meantime he had been working on the rehearsal for the demonstration in Paris. The premiere took place on 16 December 1923 in the Theatre des Champs Elysees. The public was impressed and excited by the Sacred dances, Dervish ceremonies and the 'stop' exercise. After the show the interest in Gurdjieff had substantially increased in Paris, but was often limited to gossip about his personal life. In December Gurdjieff was very relieved to see his mother and sister with her family, who had arrived safely from Russia.

In January 1924 Gurdjieff boarded the ship for New York with a thirty six person cortege and sailed to a land 'full of dollars'. Orage had prepared a reception and organised publicity. Many prominent writers and artists met Gurdjieff and offered him help. The first performance was given on 23 January in the Lesley Hall attended by many journalists and reporters. During the four-hour show Asiatic folk dances, Sacred dances were demonstrated as well as the command 'stop' that was very spectacular, freezing dancers in the most difficult positions. The performance triggered an avalanche of newspaper comments and reports about the show, however most of them were irrelevant or even hostile, concentrating on titillating information and showing a complete lack of understanding of the programme.

A week later a performance was given in Greenwich Village which was attended by many personalities from the literary and artistic avant garde. This audience was fascinated by the contents and the message of the demonstration, and after this performance came invitations for lectures, meetings and more demonstrations. The doors to America were at last open. Gurdjieff settled down in New York and opened his office at Childs Restaurant, where in spite of Prohibition he was served with his favourite drinks.

The last performance was given at Carnegie Hall on 3 March, where for the first time he charged for the tickets. This was necessary because the financial situation was near bankruptcy. The cost of up-keep for 36 persons, and frequent invitations for dinners, were stretching his resources. Eventually he had to sell the very valuable grand Duchess brooch and to ask his pupils to pay for themselves. In April 1924 he founded the New York branch of the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man that was going to continue his work in the United States. He returned to France in June and with him arrived at the Prieuré about eighty new American pupils.

Back at home , the news was not good. Ouspensky had formally broken off relations and forbidden his English pupils to communicate or even to mention Gurdjieff's name. In spite of the official break Ouspensky was welcome at the Prieuré and briefed by Gurdjieff about his American trip. Gurdjieff started work with his new students and the life at the Prieuré went on as usual.

Change of direction

Unexpectedly everything changed. On 8 July at 4.30 p.m. Gurdjieff hit a tree at high speed while driving a car. The car had to be written off and Gurdjieff was in a grave condition. There were no witnesses, therefore it was unclear how the accident happened. It could have been caused by the driver's tiredness, or maybe a

big lunch with plenty of alcohol contributed to the cause of the accident. All these might be plausible explanations, but why had he given Olga de Hartmann power of attorney just a few days before, why had he insisted that she should return to Fontainebleau by train that was much later at 5.00 p.m., rather than as usual, with him? Did he plan this accident? Was it done on purpose? This unexpected hypothesis finds some support.

For 5 days he was at death's door. On the sixth day he opened his eyes and from this moment on his health began slowly to improve and in August he was able to move around with the help of his wife.

On 26 August everybody received another shock. Gurdjieff announced that because of his poor health condition he would be closing the Institute and would not be continuing the work with his pupils. It caused terrible distress for everyone, especially for those who had been with him for many years, i.e. de Hartmanns, Stjoernvals and Salzmans. The new pupils from America had to return home. However, from the old pupils, the Prieuré left for good only two persons, Sophie Ouspensky settled in Asnieres, and Olgivanna went to Chicago where she soon married the famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright.

In the meantime Gurdjieff had abandoned his normal work with the pupils. He authorised Orage, who did not have much experience having been with Gurdjieff for only two years, to supervise work in the States. He appointed Miss Ethel Merston as an administrative 'director' of the Prieuré, and left his business activities to his partner.

These decisions were leading towards a new direction in his work and it appears that they were well planned. He explained his decision that way: "Since I had not, when in full strength and health, succeeded in introducing in practice into the life of people the beneficial truths elucidated for them by me, then I must at least, at any cost, succeed in doing this in theory, before my death."²¹⁵

Reading these words one can sense a certain disappointment. Gurdjieff knew that his present pupils would not be able to achieve the required level of development and knowledge to continue his work without his participation, and could not be trusted in transmitting his teaching from generation to generation. He came to the conclusion that what was needed, is a kind of 'bible' that would last for ever and would help to spread his teaching without any distortions because he was concerned that his teaching might be changed by 'wiseacring' of his followers^a.

On 16 December 1924 he began dictating to Olga de Hartmann : "It was in the year 223 after the creation of the world by objective time calculations or, as would be said here on the Earth, in the year 1921 after the birth of Christ. Through the Universe flew the trans-space communication ship Karnak". This was the beginning of his work 'Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson' that includes all his ideas and thoughts that should guide humankind.

^a See Chapter 6 on religion.

The following years were the most difficult years in Gurdjieff's personal life. In June 1925 his mother died, and on 26 June 1926 his wife died after a long illness. Between July 1925 and May 1927 Gurdjieff and Thomas de Hartmann were immersed in musical composition. Gurdjieff sometimes whistled a very complicated melody, tapped rhythm, or played with one finger on the piano, and Thomas tried to expand it and transcribe it in European notation. It was a very difficult task because these were all Eastern melodies with a different harmony and tonality. When listening to this music one could become touched to the depth of one's being²¹⁶. During this period many pieces of music were composed that were not designated as accompaniment to the movements and exercises, but were meant purely for listening.

In summer 1927 many visitors from America arrived including a lesbian 'quartet' - Margaret Anderson, Georgette Leblanc, Jane Heap and Solita Solano - women of exceptional intelligence who were also well known writers and publicists. Jane Heap and Margaret Anderson had been actively involved with the Gurdjieff work in New York since 1924.

The first draft of 'Beelzebub's Tales' was completed in October 1927, after almost 3 years of intensive work. However the author was not happy with the way he had approached the issues, with the presentation of ideas in the book. He complained : "to write my book for conscious man would be easy, but to write it for donkeys -very hard". He wanted to present problems in the right way. The book should be so simple, that every interested person would be able to understand it, but at the same time it should be very profound, so it would require deep attention, contemplation and concentration of the reader. Unfortunately he did not know how to find the solution. By 23 April 1928, St George's day and the anniversary of his wife's birthday he found the way out. The solution was found through his 'intentional suffering' because he realised that the best part of the book was written during his wife's and mother's illness and death. He decided that pushing away his nearest pupils would create the right climate to work on the book. He believed that through solitude and suffering he would gather new energy for writing. Separation from Margaret Anderson and Georgette Leblanc was relatively easy because they were convinced that they possessed the necessary understanding, Sophie Ouspensky left unwillingly for London to join her husband, and the Salzmanns decided to go to Germany for a short stay. Only Olga de Hartmann remained with Gurdjieff. It proved to be the right decision and the revision of the book progressed much faster, and in the late autumn of 1928 had been completed. Very soon afterwards Gurdjieff began writing the second book of the cycle "Meeting with the Remarkable Man".

In January 1929 Gurdjieff arrived in New York with de Hartmanns. The main purpose of his visit was to collect money. When he returned in April his wallet was full of dollars. After returning from America Gurdjieff banished his closest and most faithful followers - de Hartmanns. For Thomas it was a shock beyond his endurance, and he never forgave Gurdjieff and never saw him again. However Olga was still coming to the Prieuré, and only in February 1930, after a stressful encounter she gave up visiting.

In summer 1930 Alexandre Salzman left the Prieuré. His outstanding artistic abilities were never properly utilised and he positioned himself outside the main stream of the Institute's activities, but he could not imagine life outside it. His attitude to life could be summarised by his saying: "I can't bring myself to fall in with this monkey-cage agitation which people so dramatically call life"²¹⁷. His main contribution to the Gurdjieff movement was recruitment of the first prominent Frenchman, a writer called, René Daumal, who, at the age of 22, had already a very rich past. He had published avant-garde poetry, founded and edited a modern art magazine, but was, unfortunately a drug addict. Salzman helped him to fight the addiction and directed him on the Gurdjieff way. Daumal wrote: "He restores my hope and purpose in life. I see that the hidden knowledge, which I dreamt of, exists in the world, and that someday I may, if I deserve it, attain it".

On 13 November 1930 Gurdjieff arrived on his fourth visit to New York. This time he had arranged a full confrontation with Orage, who was away, and his group. Gurdjieff demanded that each member of the group sign a declaration that he would not maintain any relationship with Orage without Gurdjieff's special permission. When Orage came back on 10 December, Gurdjieff gave him this declaration, and to his surprise Orage signed it - which means that he had agreed not to maintain any contact with himself! When Gurdjieff sailed back on 14 March 1931, he left Orage totally crushed with his scattered group.^a

The financial situation of the Institute was getting worse. The followers in America became less generous, but income from England was cut off by Ouspensky. Large debts forced Gurdjieff to bankruptcy and the Institute was closed on 11 May 1932. It was a big shock for Gurdjieff and his faithful. Gurdjieff left for Paris and shut himself off from everybody. He left behind his personal belongings and many original manuscripts and musical notes that had been saved by Jeanne Salzman.

In September 1932 Gurdjieff drafted very quickly a book entitled "The Herald of Coming Good: First Appeal to Contemporary Humanity". It was the only work published in his lifetime, but has not brought him any recognition. It was partly auto-biographical and partly considerations about human nature. It should have prepared readers for his main work 'Beelzebub's Tales', however completely failed in its purpose^b.

In the autumn of 1933 Gurdjieff went to New York, where he met many writers and publicists. In June 1934 he met Olgivanna and her famous husband, the architect Frank Lloyd Wright in Spring Green, Wisconsin. It was an important meeting for her because she wanted Gurdjieff's blessing for the 'Taliesin Fellowship' to teach Gurdjieff's movements and other aspects of his work. To her relief her husband accepted Gurdjieff and remarked that he resembled St Augustine, Lao Tse and Jesus.²¹⁸

After returning to New York, while drafting the introduction to the third book *Life is Real Only then, When I am*', he learnt that Orage had died of a heart attack on 6 November 1934. Gurdjieff was inconsolable for

^a Orage had very little experience to lead the movement in America. The work in the groups in America had very little in common with the work at the Prieuré.

^b Soon after the publication, Gurdjieff changed his mind and repudiated it.

the loss and did not write a word for the next two months. In April 1935 Gurdjieff finished the Prologue to 'Life is Real..', but soon afterwards abandoned his writing. It was supposed to be the most important work of the whole cycle, giving directions for the further development of man, and it should have provided information about the Sarmoung Brotherhood. Giving up writing when Gurdjieff was still full of energy could indicate a change of plans. Could it be possible that he came to the conclusion that giving people this kind of information would be premature because they were not capable of understanding it and use it?

In April 1935 Gurdjieff made an enquiry through an intermediary in the Soviet Embassy in Washington if he could return to Russia and teach there. It would indicate a total lack of understanding of the situation in the Soviet Union where the Communist terror was reaching its peaks. It is possible that he planned to use the influence of his famous cousin, the sculptor Mercourov. The answer came very quickly - Gurdjieff would be able to return, but he would not be able to teach. On 7 May Gurdjieff disappeared without a trace. Did he go to Russia, or Asia? This will remain a mystery.

In September he was back at his favourite place, Café de la Paix. The news that was awaiting him was both bad and good. His old friend Alexandre Salzman had died from tuberculosis, but Jeanne de Salzman had started the first French Gurdjieff group at Sévres.

In March 1939 Gurdjieff arrived, with his secretary, Solita Solano on his penultimate visit to America. He had already predicted and warned of coming war - "horrors on an enormous scale that were about to take place". His followers asked him to stay in America, to retire to a country house, to cultivate a garden. Gurdjieff ironically responded: "Yes, that good life. For a dog. For man, no. You eat, you sleep, live in dream. How could that be life of a man?"²¹⁹. He returned to Europe in May 1939.

Upon his arrival he learnt that René Daumal had tuberculosis in both lungs, and in England Sophie Ouspensky was ill and awaited his visit. However her husband was not very keen to invite Gurdjieff. Ouspensky had reached the apogee of his success. He lived like a king in Virginia Water, had about 1000 pupils, a substantial income and a high social position. However internally he felt unfulfilled. He had never managed to contact higher sources of esoteric knowledge and to gain mystical experience. He had found consolation in drinking. He had delayed Gurdjieff's visit until August, and when the war started it was too late.

War

During the first few months of the war Gurdjieff was busy hoarding food and other supplies. He knew what would be immediate ravages of the war, because he had experienced them himself. At this time the French interest in his teaching had been growing and the group included a few prominent intellectuals. When Hitler invaded France in May 1940, most of the American students went home and Gurdjieff started to teach only French pupils. From October onwards new pupils gathered at his flat at 6 Rue des Colonels Renard, and Gurdjieff had to hire a hall for practising movements.

In spite of the insistence of his American followers, Gurdjieff refused to go to the States and to leave his pupils. A completely different attitude was adopted by Ouspensky, who, convinced that the war was lost, abandoned his students and left on 29 January 1941 for New York.

Calmly, without emotional involvement, Gurdjieff observed the war. His political neutrality allowed him to do business with the French as well as the Germans, however he was under police observation due to his foreign connections. The police was aware of his illegal business, but they shut their eyes to his black market activities.

The war had been coming to an end, and Paris was liberated on 25 August 1944. The French police arrested Gurdjieff and accused him of illegal possession of foreign currency. After 24 hours in jail he was released owing to the support of his influential pupils.

Last years

After the war the Gurdjieff movement was segmented into several groups, led by ambitious leaders. The Orage groups in New York did not work with Ouspensky, who lived in Mendham, New Jersey. The Ouspensky groups in England, led by Kenneth Walker and other leaders had not been in touch with Gurdjieff, nor with other groups led by Maurice Nicoll and John Bennett, who had not contact with each other. This behaviour shows a very human attitude. The leaders of groups jostle for position, but at the same time promote teachings that are condemning any craving for power and vanity as some of the worst human shortcomings. The question arises if the leaders of the Gurdjieff movement have changed themselves under its influence.

In 1946 English pupils of Jane Heap began coming to Paris, but other English groups stayed in isolation. In January 1947 Ouspensky returned to England; he had become an alcoholic and was seriously ill. Gurdjieff warmly invited him to Paris. but he could not see a chance for reconciliation and accept Gurdjieff as a master. Piotr Ouspensky died on 2 October 1947, leaving his group cut off from the Teacher.

The leaders of the Ouspensky groups did not know what action to take and decided to contact Sophie Ouspensky, who was still living in New Jersey, and ask her for guidance. At first they did not get any answer, but later, in January 1948, they received a message from her saying : Get in touch with Mr. Gurdjieff in Paris. However the leaders were unable to make up their mind, and eventually came a message from Gurdjieff himself: "You are sheep without a shepherd. Come to me", and this was decisive. Still two groups led by Maurice Nicoll and John Bennett had not contacted Gurdjieff. Only after a strong advice from Mme Ouspensky Bennett had got in touch with Gurdjieff. At last he visited Gurdjieff in August 1948 after 25 years of absence. He offered Gurdjieff two hundred students and strong support for the movement.

After Ouspensky's death, more pupils from England came to Paris, among them arrived Kenneth Walker and John Bennett with his sixty students. The English students were shocked. Instead of official lectures and

graphs on the blackboard, they found delicious dinners and toasts with vodka. Their years of formal approach to learning were challenged by Gurdjieff telling them "You must feel, your mind is a luxury. You must suffer remorse in your feelings".²²⁰

However the most important work had not been completed yet. 'Beelzebub's Tales' had not been published yet. This work, containing the quintessence of his teaching, was, after twenty years of its completion still a typed draft, copied by students. Gurdjieff predicted that, once this work was published, he would disappear. The main problem was that the publication of this book would be very expensive because Gurdjieff had planned editions in four languages at a price affordable for everybody. The funds for this enterprise could only come from America, therefore Gurdjieff decided to give demonstrations of the Sacred Dances in New York. Gurdjieff arrived in the States in November 1948. He had appointed a relatively young and inexperienced, pupil of Ouspensky's, Scot - Lord Pentland to be responsible for the work in America, a fact that had upset other American leaders. He visited Sophie Ouspensky in Mendham, who showed him her husband's book - Fragments of an Unknown Teaching - that had been written 18 years ago, and had not been published yet in spite of great interest. Mme Ouspensky wanted Gurdjieff to make a decision about its publication. The book not only accurately presented Gurdjieff's theories, but also honestly showed who was the originator of these ideas. This was probably the main reason why Ouspensky did not want to publish it. He was afraid that the book would confuse his pupils who had not been allowed even to mention Gurdjieff's name. And so in Mendham Gurdjieff received the manuscript comprising almost 80 percent of his own words.

During the celebration of his birthday in America on 13 January 1949 Gurdjieff made a decision about the publication of Beelzebub's Tales and urged his followers to buy it for £100, what was at that times a large sum of money, so that others could receive it free. He appointed three people to be responsible for its publication: René Zuber for France, Pentland for America and Bennett for England. In March Gurdjieff returned to France.

Gurdjieff spent the summer travelling to Switzerland and the South of France. His last trip, to see the oldest paintings in the world in the caves of Lascaux, took place on 31 August. Gurdjieff was getting tired and his legs were badly swollen, but still he planned further trips to America. On 14 October he collapsed while visiting his pupils' classes. On 21 October the proofs of Beelzebub's Tales arrived from the publishers.

On 26 October Gurdjieff was admitted to the American hospital at Neuilly. The next day he gave Jeanne de Salzmann his last instructions: "The essential thing, the first thing, is to prepare a nucleus of people capable of responding to the demand which will arise... So long as there is no responsible nucleus, the action of the ideas will not go beyond a certain threshold. That will take time... a lot of time, even."²²¹ These are his last recorded words. Gurdjieff died in hospital on 29 October at 10.30 a.m.. The requiem mass was performed in the Alexandre Nevski Cathedral in Paris. He was buried in the family grave in Avon next to his wife and mother.

Gurdjieff about himself

The figure of Gurdjieff is wrapped in a shroud of mystery, because as has been mentioned already, he did not talk about himself. Even his book "Meetings with Remarkable Men" describing his life cannot be treated as an autobiography because it had been written to illustrate the behaviour and action of truly conscious men. Most of the information provided in this book had never been confirmed by any independent sources. Most of the stories should be treated allegorically because they convey profound messages.

Gurdjieff had said to Bennett in a coded message: "I can write cheque with seven zeros...Even your King cannot do that". What did he try to convey? Not that he was a millionaire, but man Type Seven that possessed Objective Reason and true 'I'. A man who is immortal within the boundaries of the Solar system.

In Beelzebub's Tales he wrote:

"This original personality of mine, already 'sniffed out' by certain Individuals from both choirs of the Judgement Seat Above whence Objective Justice proceeds²²²...Thereupon, our Abundantly Loving Common Father condescended to direct these same Sacred Individuals to actualise more often in the common presence of certain terrestrial beings the germ of a Sacred Individual²²³...For the moment we can only say that if this property of the terrestrial beings is to disappear from that unfortunate planet, it will be through Time alone, either under the guidance of a Being with very high reason."²²⁴

Did he refer to himself? Possibly.

Gurdjieff as a teacher and person

Stories originated from some of his ex-followers and picked up selectively by reporters and some writers present Gurdjieff as a tyrannical, ruthless and even cruel person, who demanded the near-impossible from his pupils. Therefore it is important to look into his behaviour towards his pupils and identify the purpose of his harsh treatment. His relations with his followers were based on two principles: to help them to know themselves and to help them to develop themselves as quickly as possible, and to make sure that they would attain full and true freedom.

In implementing the first principle Gurdjieff might have had to resort to a demanding and unpleasant attitude towards his pupils. Unlike Ouspensky, Gurdjieff believed that merely lectures and intellectual analysis was not sufficient to help his students to know themselves. They had to experience certain conditions themselves, and they had to be put in such difficult situations that they had never faced before. One such situation happened during the group work in Essentuki, when Gurdjieff demanded, that all personal valuable belongings and jewellery to be handed over to him for the upkeep of the group. However the main purpose of this experience was to help his pupils to realise that if they truly wanted to be free, they

must not become slaves of material riches. For many pupils, especially women, descending from rich families, giving away their family jewellery was a distressing experience. Gurdjieff understood their feelings, and he returned jewellery to some women when he knew that the person understood the purpose and had internally accepted this sacrifice. Gurdjieff was very sensitive in his dealings with others, and when, after several years in Paris, Mrs. Stjoernal reproached Gurdjieff, that he had never returned her valuable earrings that she had given to him in Constantinople, Gurdjieff, miraculously, managed to find them and returned them to her.

For his car excursions around France and Switzerland he took with him more people than could comfortably fit into the car, and this was causing tensions between the passengers. But the trip was always a lesson. Journeys did not go as planned. The way was lost, passengers had to face many 'unexpected' problems and obstacles. The announced hours of departures, rests and arrivals had been continuously changed. The pupils were facing embarrassing situations when, for example, they arrived at 2 a.m. and Gurdjieff, with deafening noise, was waking up the hotel personnel and demanded meals and service. Of course, at the departure he gave everybody large tips. The purpose of this behaviour was to show his pupils that they should not slavishly follow the accepted social rules of 'bon ton', i.e. proper and socially acceptable behaviour - because these habits are so deeply rooted in everybody that they enslave us.

Another way of knowing oneself was, as was already mentioned, through hard physical work. We have to remember that most of the pupils originated from the privileged classes employing servants, therefore they were neither used to physical work, nor to take care of themselves. So far those, who had never done any monotonous, hard physical work, had a chance to make this 'superhuman' effort, enabling them to know their own possibilities, stamina and willpower. In the Institute some pupils worked in the garden digging soil, taking care of plants, fetching water from a far-away well. Others worked in the forest cutting trees for timber or firewood, in the kitchen preparing meals, or had been involved in building the Study House, or the Turkish bath. The worst tasks included digging trenches and filling them up again, digging wells and breaking stones that were not used for anything.

Gurdjieff always stressed that work is not the goal but the means to an end. Fritz Peters^a in his book²²⁵ describes an event, where two English gardeners prepared a garden full of fantastic flowers and proudly showed Gurdjieff their work. The same night, the gate to the garden was 'accidentally' opened and cows munched all the flowers. The work was also used for the natural selection of pupils. Who had not been able to make a big physical effort, would have no chance with the following work that would be demanding an even greater effort and willpower. Women were asked to perform physically lighter, but equally demanding duties in the kitchen, garden and around the house. Of course nobody was forced to follow these rigours, everybody could leave when they wanted, and in some cases students were even encouraged to do so.

^a Fritz Peters spent four years in the Prieuré (from age eleven till fifteen)

Gurdjieff maintained that a person can only know himself, when he faces new, unexpected and unpleasant problems and situations. To speed up this process Gurdjieff on purpose arranged conflict situations. He wanted to 'shake up' his pupils, to force them out of their usual behaviour and their habits. He believed that without trouble and conflicts, life becomes stagnant. He caused, therefore, quarrels, clashes and endless misunderstandings between students. Not everybody could stand such stress, and some students gave up. In the Prieuré he employed a Russian émigré, Rachmilievitch, who had a very difficult character and bad temper, and was causing many fights and conflicts between pupils. He endlessly complained, was unhappy practically about everything and everybody including Gurdjieff, who maintained that there is no other place on Earth, where Rachmilievitch could do such useful work.

To understand better the methods of teaching and the way of Gurdjieff's thinking, as well as his attitude to his pupils, let us use Fritz Peters's recollections. Peters describes an event when during Gurdjieff's absence, the life in the Institute was managed by a very strict and unpleasant old spinster called Miss Madison. She had been taking notes about any bad behaviour and transgressions of all those living in the Prieuré, but especially of the children. At the top of her list was obviously Fritz. After Gurdjieff's return, at a meeting of the whole Institute, Miss Madison read the transgression of each child. The guilty child was called to receive a penalty as decided by Gurdjieff. When terrified Fritz stood up in front of Gurdjieff, he expected the worst. To his surprise, instead of a penalty Gurdjieff gave him 10 francs for each transgression, what was then a significant sum of money for a child. Other children received correspondingly less, but Miss Madison, for all her effort, was given only 10 francs. When Fritz later asked Gurdjieff, why he received so much money, Gurdjieff replied:

"What you not understand, is that not everyone can be troublemaker, like you. This important in life - is ingredient, like yeast for making bread. Without trouble, conflict, life become dead. People live in status-quo. Live only by habit, automatically, and without conscience. You good for Miss Madison. You irritate Miss Madison all time -more than anyone else, which is why you get most reward. Without you, possibly for Miss Madison's conscience fall asleep. This money should really be rewarded from Miss Madison, not from me. You help keep Miss Madison alive."²²⁶

Peters admitted that getting a reward for his bad behaviour must have been a terrible experience for Miss Madison. Gurdjieff shook his head, burst out laughing and continued:

"You not see or understand important things that happen to Miss Madison when give her money. How you feel at time? You feel pity for Miss Madison, no? All other people also feel pity for Miss Madison, too."...

"People not understand about learning. Think necessary talk all time, that learn through mind, through words. Not so. Many things can only learn with feeling, even from sensation. But because man talk all time- use only formulatory centre- people not understand this. What you not see other night in study-house is that Miss Madison have new experience for her. Is poor woman, people not like, people think she funny - they laugh at her. But other night, people not laugh. True, Miss Madison feel uncomfortable, feel embarrassed

when I give money, feel shame perhaps. But when many people also feel for her sympathy, pity, compassion, even love, she understand this but not right away with mind. She fell, for first time in life, sympathy from many people. She not even know then that she feel this, but her life change; with you, I use you like example, last summer you hate Miss Madison. Now you not hate, you not think funny, you feel sorry. You even like Miss Madison. This good for her even if she not know right away - you will show; you cannot hide this from her, even if wish, cannot hide. So she now have friend, when used to be enemy. This good think which I do for Miss Madison. I not concerned she understand this now - someday she understand and make her feel warm in heart. This unusual experience - this warm feeling - for such personality as Miss Madison who not have charm, who not friendly in self. Someday, perhaps even soon, she have good feeling because many people feel sorry, feel compassion for her. Someday she even understand what I do and even like me for this. But this kind learning take long time."

"Also good thing for you in this. You young, only boy still, you not care about other people, care for self. I do this to Miss Madison and you think I do bad thing. You feel sorry, you not forget, you think I do bad thing to her. But now you understand not so. Also good for you, because you feel about other person - you identify with Miss Madison, put self in her place, also regret what you do. Is necessary put self in place of other person if wish understand and help. This good for your conscience, this way is possibility for you learn not hate Miss Madison. All people same - stupid, blind, human. If I do bad thing, this make you learn love other people, not just self."²²⁷

When we give some thought to what Gurdjieff had said to Peters, we would realise, that his behaviour was just, right and logical. However the description of this incident given by a witness could leave a very unpleasant impressions. And the same misunderstanding could happen in other similar situations. Outsiders, or even pupils, were unable to understand Gurdjieff's behaviour and his methods of teaching, because he could not explain these to them, as he had explained them to Peters. Any attempt of explanation would be counter-productive because the artificial conditions he created with a special purpose would lose their efficacy. However there is not the slightest doubt that Gurdjieff was motivated solely by the personal benefits of his pupils, who often were not able to understand him.

The second principle - ensuring and protecting freedom of his students - was much more difficult to guarantee. Gurdjieff did not want to start a new religion, school or sect. He did not want students to become enslaved by new dogmas, rules and beliefs; he did not want them to become dependent on him, because this would result in the loss of their personal freedom. Gurdjieff's behaviour, very often not understood by his closest followers, was consequently ensuing from his teaching and his aim that, as a result of the work in the group, each pupil should attain his true freedom. In practice this was not so easily implemented. Owing to Gurdjieff's dominant personality and charisma, his authority, knowledge of people and understanding of human problems, his pupils became dependent on him and eventually were not able to lead a normal life without him. To avoid this situation to happen, Gurdjieff's behaviour was often very unpleasant and

loathsome. He even had to force some of his pupils to leave the Institute. For example, after the departure of de Hartmanns from the Prieuré, Gurdjieff had to use very drastic means to force Olga to break off contacts with him because she was not able to accept the separation and had been returning to the Institute.

Such behaviour might look to us very strange or even callous because it is practically unheard of at the present time. Without any doubt Gurdjieff's approach was completely different from the attitude of many gurus and teaching masters, whose main ambition is to lead an organisation or school with the largest possible number of followers. Also for his own development, Gurdjieff did not want to create a 'royal court', to be surrounded by devoted and faithful followers in an atmosphere of love and comfort. He also needed, for his own benefit, constant struggle and intentional suffering as well as conquering problems.

As had been mentioned already, we know very little about his personal life. His family, wife and the closest followers never discussed his private life, at least we do not have any record of it. He never confided in anybody, and his behaviour and comments to his pupils were always determined by aims that had been established beforehand. Most of the books about Gurdjieff had been written by his students, who had been under his influence, and therefore concentrated on his teaching. Most published material about his private life came from hostile reporters and certain writers, whose accounts were based on information originated from disappointed Gurdjieff students, who had not been able to continue their work. As already mentioned a book by Fritz Peters belongs to the unique publications. Fritz was too young to be a student, but he had been in constant contact with Gurdjieff and had observed his behaviour closely. In his book he writes about Gurdjieff more as a man, than as a teacher, although it is practically impossible to separate these two sides.

We can be sure of one thing about Gurdjieff - he loved and cared about his family. During the period of his travelling he always returned to his family to rest and recover after his adventures. When living in Essentuki during the revolution, he brought there not only his close family but also distant relatives, so he had to support about 150 persons at such difficult times. When he settled down in France, he immediately brought to the Prieuré his mother, brother and sister, what was very difficult to do considering the political situation in Russia. The death of his brother Dmitri caused him to cancel an important trip to America.

One could say that, in general, Gurdjieff always took care of people in need, and e.g. Russian emigrants, who were without any means used to live in the Prieuré lived for many years. When Peters came to Gurdjieff's flat in Paris just after the war, he noticed daily visits of old people. They were mainly very poor, lonely people in distress. Gurdjieff's attitude towards them was completely different than that shown to his own pupils - full of courtesy, generosity and kind-hearted. He said to Peters: These people are my family²²⁸. Peters also witnessed a purchase by Gurdjieff of a picture painted by an old lady. The few thousand francs that he paid her would ensure her upkeep for several weeks. Answering Peters's question -why did he do it, he said: "it is not only the question of money, it is very important for her that someone will buy her picture, because in this work she gave all her heart. It is very bad if there is no buyer for this type of goods." Showing the walls in his flat, where picture were hanging from floor to ceiling Gurdjieff joked that he had

the worst collection of pictures in Paris, and possibly in the whole world.²²⁹ Peters gives the best résumé of Gurdjieff's character by saying "What I knew as a child, I am beginning to *understand* as an adult. Gurdjieff *practised* love in a form that is unknown to almost everyone; without limits."²³⁰

Gurdjieff showed a completely different attitude to rich and conceited people. He treated them with subtle contempt, mocked them, but mainly fleeced them. Peters describes his method of collecting money during his stay in New York in 1933. He invited several rich and distinguished guests of both sexes to his apartment for dinner. During the meal he directed the conversation towards sex and encouraged his visitors to behave without restraint. After a few drinks, when the guests felt at ease and lost their inhibitions, and some of them started to undress, he told them all, in loud, stentorian tones, that they had already confirmed his observations of the decadence of the Americans and that they need no longer to demonstrate for him... He said that he deserved to be paid for this lesson and that he would gladly accept cheques and cash from them".²³¹ This evening alone brought him several thousand dollars.

One of the most unusual features of his personality was his ability to win over people. He possessed an unheard-of and almost incredible ability to sense the perception and emotions of other people. It went beyond the limits of normal aptitudes and looked like telepathic reception. Gurdjieff knew a great deal about people's psychological processes and about their way of thinking, therefore he was fully aware what was going on in the minds of those he was involved with, never making a mistake in his judgement²³² of others. Gurdjieff used his abilities to evaluate his students and to help them in their development, he never used it to harm anybody. This aptitude explains how he was able to gain the trust of so many outstanding people like Ouspensky, de Hartmann, Orage, Salzmann, Bennett and others, who after the first meeting, had become convinced that they had found somebody for whom they had been waiting all their lives. Many people mentioned a strange and mysterious influence exerted on them from the first moment of their encounter with him, whereas his enemies accused him of hypnotic powers. Without any doubt Gurdjieff possessed personal 'magnetism' and charisma, which was strongly affecting other people, and aroused extreme feelings; some adored him and treated him like an idol; others hated him and accused him of the worst possible deeds.

Gurdjieff's activities always required substantial funds which he managed to obtain using his exceptional business acumen. Such income was used for the upkeep of the Institute, to support pupils, family and the poor, and never for personal luxuries. His training for survival had started early, and as a teenager he was already earning for his own needs. While living in Kars, he used various methods of obtaining money, some of them not very honest, stealing cigarettes or other goods from the army and selling them on the black market. However, these were exceptional situations. Normally he worked very hard repairing watches, locks, sawing machines, etc., or even embroidering covers for pillows. Later he traded in almost anything. He knew that his teaching would require substantial resources, therefore, in 1907 he engaged in business activities in Tashkent on a very large scale. He bought and sold shops, cinemas, restaurants, and traded in

cattle, fish and oil. He was, when he arrived in Moscow, a very wealthy man. However during the revolution he lost everything, but was able to find enough resources to support his family and pupils.

The funds needed to buy the Prieuré and to feed a hundred of people were beyond his means, and therefore in 1924 he tried to procure the necessary finance from America. His American followers became the main source of his income for the next 25 years. Any sums of money received from his followers he spent on the Institute and on teaching activities, whereas money for his personal expenses and support for his family came from his small business. In Paris he was the owner of a factory making artificial eyelashes and he ran a carpet business²³³.

In his private life he was a real man to the core. He loved good food, enjoyed armaniac and calvados, and invited sometimes fifty pupils and visitors for dinner to his small flat. These dinners, often prepared by himself, were true feasts. He had an exceptional sense of humour and liked to crack a joke. In the Prieuré, during the rest in the Turkish bath, in men's company the jokes were sometimes spicy.

Gurdjieff loved to drive a car, but he never bothered to follow the highway code. He took his pupils on long trips around France and Switzerland. In spite of several accidents, he continued to drive up to the last weeks of his life. He liked to have people around him and spent a lot of time in cafés and restaurants, where he had his 'office', where he met people, talked business, or even wrote his books.

The subject that was most intriguing to reporters was always his personal life. Gossip had been spread about orgies and a promiscuous sexual life, on account of a general belief that every leader of a sect would take advantage of his position. Reality was much more prosaic, and in the Prieuré only married couples lived together in separate lodgings. Gurdjieff's sexual behaviour was probably within the then prevailing norms. Although he never pretended that he was a 'saint', however he was discrete and the pupils avoided discussion of this topic. Gurdjieff's pupils included people with various sexual interests, as the 'lesbian quartet' already mentioned. Gurdjieff never condoned sexual deviations, but was also very tolerant and never rejected anybody who wanted to know himself.

The development of the Gurdjieff movement

Gurdjieff did not try to build a monolithic organisation because this type of structure would lead to the cult of a leader. Therefore after his death there was nobody who could act with his authority and blessing.

At the beginning, the teaching was carried out in independent groups led by his closet and most experienced pupils. Mainly his eldest and closest co-worker - Jeanne de Salzman contributed to the unification of the Gurdjieff movement. Owing to her commitment Gurdjieff organisations were established in various countries, co-operating between each other. In France she had created the Gurdjieff Foundation that coordinated all the groups' activities and was responsible for the publication of Gurdjieff's books. After her death in 1990, the movement in France was led by her son Michel up to his death in 2001.

In England the groups led by Jane Heap, Kenneth Walker and others with the help of Jeanne de Salzmann established The Gurdjieff Society in London which was led from 1950 till 1980 by a French woman, Henrietta Lannes. After her death the English organisation was helped by Frenchmen Henri Tricol and Maurice Desselle. The Maurice Nicoll group joined the Gurdjieff Society in 1962, a few years after his death. Although John Bennett had recognised the leading role of Jeanne de Salzmann, in practice he led independent groups, and in 1971-1976 he ran a school in Sherbourne, which was attended by hundreds of students. After Bennett's death, his groups in England and America continued independent work.

In 1953 the Gurdjieff Foundation was established in America by pupils of Orage and Ouspensky and was led by Lord Pentland till 1984. At present many groups operate in several states and in Canada and Australia under the umbrella of the Foundation. In parallel there are still several independent groups, for example, Bennett's students started the Association Clarmount, and Olgivanna Lloyd Wright continued her work with the 'Taliesin' Foundation in Spring Green, Wisconsin.

There are also many groups led by independent leaders, who use a part of Gurdjieff's theories, but have introduced their own ideas and methods to their teaching. The most established leaders include Rodney Collin (1909-1956), who organised groups in Mexico; Oscar Ichazo (1931-), who established groups in Chile and the USA, as well as Jan Cox, Eugene Gold and Gary Chicoine.

However there are always people who know how to make money from anything and this includes Gurdjieff's teaching. To the best known belongs an American organisation called the Fellowship of Friends Inc., run by Robert Burton. This organisation has established schools of the Fourth Way in more than 30 cities, mainly in the USA and Europe, but also in Tokyo and Tel-Aviv. They advertise and recruit members through book-marks inserted into Gurdjieff and Ouspensky books. They act very discretely without publishing their addresses. Their members contribute about 10-12 percent of their income to the Fellowship.

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