The Making of Man

KENNETH WALKER

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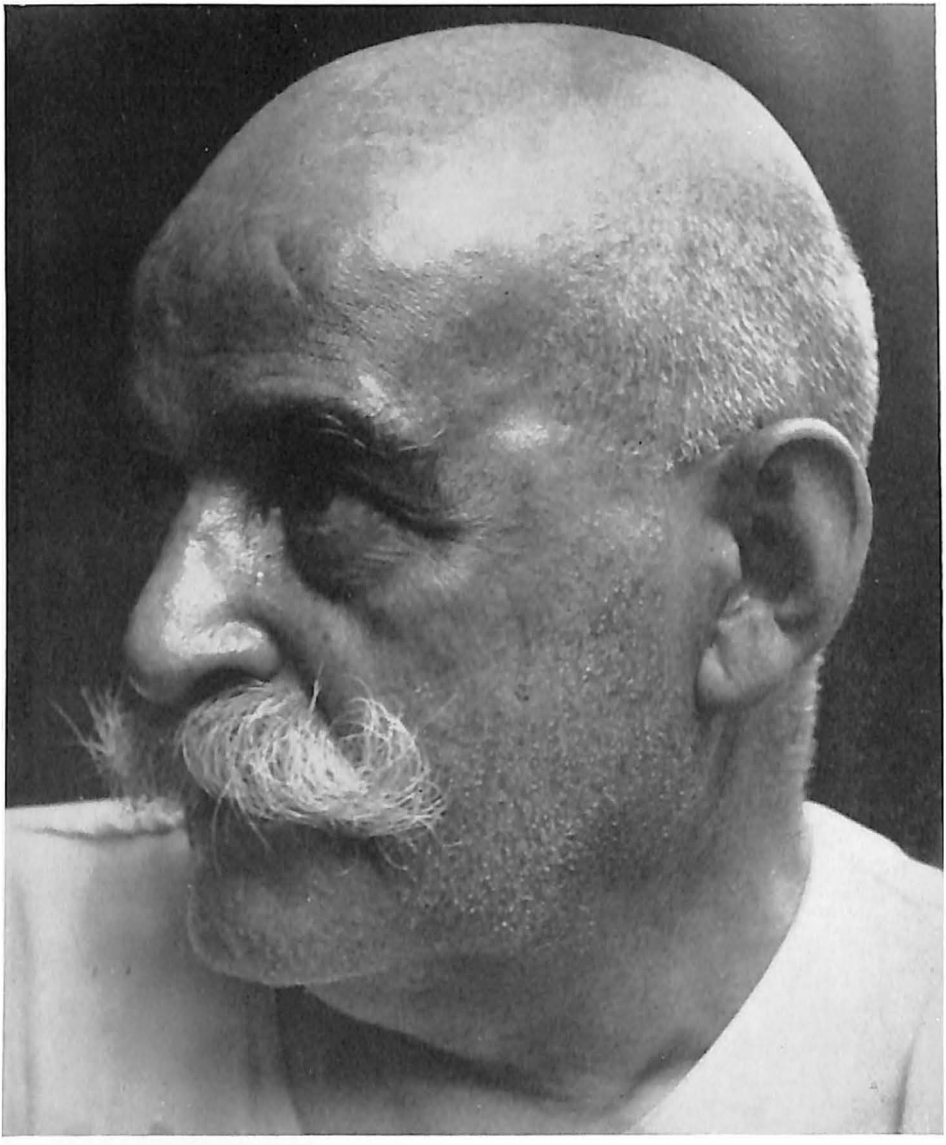

Gurdjieff. A photograph taken in Paris.

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by

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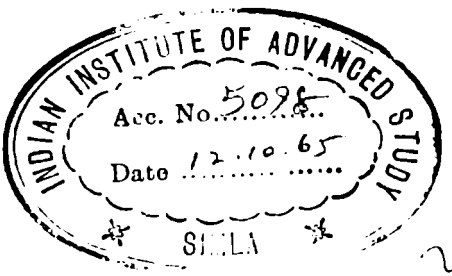

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When there is a complete silence in the being, either a stillness of the whole being, or a stillness behind, unaffected by surface movements, then we can become aware of a Self, a spiritual substance of our being, an existence exceeding even the soul's individuality, spreading itself into universality, surpassing all dependence on any natural form or action, extending itself upwards into a transcendence of which the limits are not visible. It is these liberations of the spiritual part in us which are the spiritual evolution in nature.

SRI AUROBINDO on the
Evolution of the Spiritual Man

Man is in the Making but henceforth he must make himself.

LOWES DICKINSON

I

MAN AS AN EXPERIMENT

LIFE ON THIS PLANET CAN BE LOOKED UPON as being a great experiment for us all, as individuals, for we have to learn, by trial and error, how best to live. It is also an experiment for humanity as a whole. Nature has made many different experiments with different forms of life, and some of her designs have proved successful. Others have been dismal failures and have had to be wiped off the surface of the earth. The great slow-witted and slow-moving reptiles of the Reptilian Age were examples of nature's failures, and in course of time, they were replaced by the far cleverer mammals and birds. Nobody knows what will be the ultimate outcome of the great *human* experiment now being carried out in the great laboratories of the Solar System, the experiment of producing a *self-evolving* being capable of reaching a higher level by his own efforts. This is an experiment which, in the opinion of Ouspensky, is still in progress. In support of his thesis Ouspensky has pointed out to us that man is a far more complicated form of living organism than is required merely for the purposes of surviving, and of propagating itself on this planet. Man has been endowed with the special organs which are required for his attaining a higher level of existence by his own efforts. To quote Ouspensky's words:

You must try to understand what is meant by the statement that man is potentially a self-developing organism. It does not mean that man is ready-made, but that he must discover both himself and the path which he has to follow.

Aid and advice have been given to man from time to time by the inspired religious teachers who have visited this planet, and it is noteworthy that the instructions given to him have always been the same. They are such as to assist him to raise the level of his consciousness and thereby to exercise a greater measure of control over himself.

Many other writers have written along similar lines, on the subject of the future evolution of man. In *The Meaning of Evolution* Gaylord Simpson writes:

> It is false to conclude that man is *nothing* but the highest animal, or the most progressive product of organic evolution. He is a fundamentally *new* sort of animal, and one in which ... a fundamentally new sort of evolution has appeared.

What does Gaylord Simpson mean by a new sort of evolution? He means a form of evolution which is entirely different to the mechanical form of evolution described by the Darwinians. The Darwinian form of evolution depends on two factors; first on the accidental appearance in the offspring of variations which have been inherited from the parents, and second, on the sifting action of the struggle for survival on the inheritors of these chance variations. Offspring which have been born with *favourable* characteristics are more successful in the fierce competition for survival, whilst those inheriting less favourable variations perish and leave no offspring. The evolution to which Gaylord Simpson and Ouspensky are both referring in their writings is an entirely different kind of evolution from this. It is an evolution which depends on the efforts made by the organism, not only to survive, but to attain a higher level of being.

But again, what is meant by the phrase 'A higher level of being'? That will depend on the nature of the organism to which reference is made. In the case of a man it means the further development of that particular feature in man which distinguishes him from all the animals, namely, his self-awareness, or consciousness. Man's further evolution would mean, therefore, his gradual transformation from a semi-conscious into a *more fully conscious* organism. The factors by which this can be brought about, and

the changes in man which are favourable to this form of evolution will be dealt with much more fully in the later chapters of this book.

My third quotation on the subject of man's evolution has been taken from the writings of my old friend, Lowes Dickinson. In that delightful book of his entitled *A Modern Symposium*, he stresses the facts that man is potentially a self-creating being and that he can count no longer on the purely mechanical form of evolution, which has brought him to his present level. In the future, man will have to evolve, if he is going to evolve at all, by his own efforts:

> Man is in the making but henceforth he must make himself. To that point Nature has led him out of the primeval slime. She has given him limbs, she has given him a brain, she has given him the rudiments of a soul. Now it is for *him* to make or mar the splendid torso. Let him look no more to her for aid; for it is her will to create one who has the powers to create himself. If he fails, she fails; back goes the metal into the pot; and the great process begins anew. If he succeeds, he succeeds alone. His fate is in his own hands.

Ouspensky always made it clear to his audience, whenever he was talking to them on this subject of man's further evolution, that it was by no means certain that the Solar Laboratory's experiment would succeed. He told us that it would be easy for the later stages of the experiment to go wrong. Indeed, according to Biblical myths, something went wrong with man's evolution at a comparatively early stage of the human experiment. Ouspensky writes of man's 'fall' that he made a serious mistake at a time when he had already risen to a great height:

> This mistake consisted in his beginning to regard himself as being much higher than he actually was. He thought he already knew what was good and what was evil; he thought that *by himself*, he could guide and direct his life *without help from outside*. Man's mistakes would not have been so great, and their bad results might have been corrected, or altered, much sooner if man had known *how* to deal with the consequences of his mistakes. But having had no previous experience of mistakes he did not know how to combat their bad results. The mistakes began to grow, began to assume gigantic proportions, until they began to

manifest themselves on all sides of man's life. Man rapidly descended to the level from which he started, plus the acquired sin.[1]

Ouspensky took what, in 1931, was regarded as being a very pessimistic view of man's future and at one of his meetings he made it clear to his audience that it was doubtful whether the Solar Laboratory's experiment in producing a self-evolving being would be a success. Indeed, there existed the possibility that it would turn out to be a dismal failure. Man might in the end, follow the bad example of the ants and, like them he might sacrifice the interests of the individual to those of the community as a whole. At another meeting he made the following statement: "I think you will agree with me that the general tendency today is to disregard the individual, and to bring all human life under vast collective schemes of social security and so on. This converts man, more and more, into a state-dependent, a state-controlled person and it renders him less free, in the name of liberty. An individual of the kind, produced by state-management, is a being who is told what to do and what to think. Such a man sees the goal of humanity as being an increasing mass-amalgam and a general uniformity spreading over the whole surface of the earth. In such an environment as this, the experiment of continuing to produce a self-evolving being would end in failure."

It cannot be said that the Solar Laboratory's experiment in producing a self-evolving being has fared any better during the thirty-odd years which have elapsed since the above words were spoken. Indeed, there are many people who would regard the outlook for man as now being even less favourable than it was at the time at which Ouspensky made his statement. The situation is certainly much more *dangerous* than it formerly was, because man has now acquired immense forces which he is utterly unfit to handle. The man of today is in a position to destroy, not only all human life, but all other forms of life on this planet.

This book is not so much concerned with the Solar Laboratory's great experiment in producing a self-evolving type of organism—a theme too great for any writer to undertake—as with the experiments that we are making, as individuals, with our own lives.

[1] P. D. Ouspensky, *A New Model of the Universe.* Kegan Paul, London, 1931.

All of us have to discover, by means of the tedious methods of trial and error, the best way of living. It is true of course that we have been given very little choice in the matter, owing to the fact that the great majority of our decisions are determined by the physical, economic, physiological and psychological laws under which we live. But we are not entirely at the mercy of our environments. In another book entitled *I Talk of Dreams* I have stated that 'we are lived rather than live', but now I am of the opinion that we possess a modicum of freedom, and that it is sometimes possible for us to do *this* thing, rather than *that* other thing. Thanks to the small range of choice we possess we are able to determine, to some small extent, the direction in which we are to move.

The above statement about our ability to *choose* is not the outcome of my psychological and philosophical speculations, but it is based on something on which I place more reliance, namely, on the observations which I have been making on myself, and on my behaviour, over a period of nearly forty years. It will be noted that during the whole of that time, I have been playing the part, not only of the experimenter, but of the animal on which he is experimenting. This has had immense advantages. It has allowed of my seeing the experimental animal's inner attitudes, as well as his external behaviour and, as a result of my observations, I have now come to the conclusion that a change in our inner attitudes, and particularly in our attitude to life as a whole, enables us to modify, to some extent, our external behaviour. In my own case the alteration in my attitude to life as a whole has been brought about quite accidentally. It was the result of my encountering, some forty years ago, a certain teaching which quickly changed my view, not only of myself, but also of everything I was then attempting to do. The teaching to which I am referring has not only provided me with a chart with which to try to find my way through life's mazes, but it has also given me a compass by which I am potentially able to discover, at any moment, the direction in which I am moving. This invaluable teaching was the system of psychological, philosophical and religious ideas which were brought back by Gurdjieff, many years ago, from his twelve

years' search for the truth in Central Asia. The compass which his teaching has given me, as a help to steering my way through the entanglements of life, is the compass of my own self-awareness or consciousness. I have already stated that if man is to evolve any further it will be by his attaining a higher level of consciousness, and the 'consciousness-test' can be applied to the progress of an individual, as well as to the progress of humanity as a whole. The test can be summed up roughly in the following words: "What is done by us, in a more conscious state, than the state in which we usually live, is in all probability a move in the right direction. What is being carried out by us automatically, in the state in which we habitually live, the state of waking-sleep, is always questionable."

I should like to have claimed that I came across these two great aids to living—for the possession of an aim, and of a sense of direction in life are indeed blessings—in the course of my patient search for truth. I am unable to do this, because, at no moment of my life, have I ever set out deliberately in search of the truth. I came across Gurdjieff's teaching purely by accident. Because the London suburb of Stamford Hill, in which my parents were living when I was a child, had long been deteriorating socially, and in several other ways as well, they decided to move westwards, in the direction of Hampstead. Now it so happened that one of our new neighbours in Hampstead was a well-known Edwardian novelist, named Annie S. Swan, with whom, and with whose children, I became very friendly. In the course of a conversation with the lady in question I happened to say that I had come across an advertisement in a newspaper about a memory-training system called the Pelman System. Because I was going up to Cambridge, in a month or two's time, and because I should have many examinations to pass there, I had made up my mind to take a course of this memory-training system, as soon as possible.

This was the first accident that happened in a chain of accidents, and it soon linked up with a second one. There also lived close to us in Hampstead a certain recently created knight, Sir William Robertson Nicoll. He was the editor of *The British Weekly*, and he was also a friend of Annie Swan's, and in the course of a conversation with him Annie Swan happened to speak of my

plans for strengthening my memory, before going up to Cambridge. Sir William was greatly impressed. "What remarkable foresight on the part of a young man", he exclaimed. "I should like to meet your friend Kenneth."

A week later I called, in answer to an invitation, at Bay Tree Lodge, where Sir William Robertson Nicoll lived. I was shown upstairs to a series of inter-communicating rooms, with more books scattered over their floors than there were books stacked on the official bookshelves. At the end of the third room sat a little old man peering into a book. On discovering my presence he rose to his feet, shook hands with me, and invited me to sit down beside him. Then he gave me his reason for asking me to come and see him. It was that his own son Maurice was going up to Cambridge very soon, and by good fortune to my own college, Gonville and Caius. Sir William said that he very much doubted whether his son Maurice possessed as much foresight and wisdom as I seemed to have. Yes, Maurice was a little erratic, unpredictable and slap-dash in his behaviour, and having freely admitted this, Sir William put his request to me. "Would it be asking too much of you", he said, "to keep an eye on Maurice during his first few terms?" He would, he continued, be very grateful to me if I would consent to do this. I was, of course, greatly flattered by this request, for Sir William was one of the minor celebrities of Hampstead. I promised to do what I could to help his son, when he arrived next year at Cambridge as a freshman.

How dismally I failed in my mission, when the time came for me to carry it out! Maurice Nicoll and I were very different types of people, and although, in the end, we became great friends, we went our own ways. I was much more docile and ordinary than he was. This was explained by the fact that I was a conventional young man endowed with all the ideals of the British public schools, and of the older universities. I had a firm belief in the 'team spirit', in 'playing the game' and in never 'letting one's side down'. So also did I struggle to maintain a 'stiff upper lip' whenever I faced adversity or defeat. I suppressed my emotions as much as was possible, and I adopted a Stoic attitude to life. It was all right for women to become emotional, and even to be hysterical

at times, but, in no circumstances, was a man ever justified in showing such weaknesses. Fortunately for me, I was fairly 'good at games' and by the end of my first year I had won my rugger-cap for the college. So also did I know all the *right* people—the people who ran the college. I had as little as possible to do with that awful gang which lived in the corner staircase of Tree Court. In other words, I was in the 'right set' at Caius, and I was also on speaking terms with several 'Blues'. The same could not possibly be said of the freshman, Maurice Nicoll. He went stubbornly along his own path and, to my way of thinking, this path led in the wrong direction. He got into a dubious set, the people who did *not* count in college affairs. At first I ventured to make a few helpful suggestions to him, but he did not seem to realize their importance, and I eventually gave up all attempts to influence him. He was clearly a rebel by temperament. I had just enough insight to recognize a streak of genius in him, and I made some allowances because of this. In my opinion, nature always adjusted the balance amongst highly gifted people by endowing them with weaknesses as well as strengths. This being so, it was essential that I should allow Maurice 'a little more rope' than I should have allowed other less gifted people. We liked one another whenever we met but, as Maurice spent most of his time outside the college, we met only infrequently.

The relationship we established between ourselves, both at Cambridge, and afterwards at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, where we both went later as medical students, was a satisfactory one and, as time passed, more and more warmth crept into it. Then, quite suddenly and unexpectedly, Fate intervened and parted us for a very long time. I was ambitious, and because I believed that there were much better prospects for a young surgeon in South America than in over-stocked London, I suddenly emigrated to Buenos Aires. In order to be able to practice surgery there I had to start from the very beginning again, and become a Spanish medical student studying for a Spanish degree at the *Facultad de Medicina.* Having satisfied my Spanish examiners at last, I set up as a surgeon in Buenos Aires. Then came the First World War, and, hypnotized by such patriotic slogans as 'A War to end Wars'; 'For King and

Country' and 'A War to Save Democracy', I left everything I had acquired in the Argentine, and sailed for England, in order to volunteer for foreign service.

Maurice Nicoll and I met only once during the First World War. This meeting occurred when I was on leave from France, and when he was on the eve of departing on the ill-fated Gallipoli expedition. We were fortunate, for we both managed to survive the muddle, the incompetence, the madness and the murder of the First World War. Then Fate ordained that we should meet a little more frequently than we had met previously. Both of us became consultants practising in Harley Street, he as a consultant psychologist, and I as a consultant surgeon. But although we were neighbours now, we were kept very busy by our respective hospital jobs and we saw comparatively little of one another.

The final incident in the chain of accidents which was to bring me into direct contact with Gurdjieff's teaching took place in 1923 at a chance encounter at the corner of Weymouth Street and Harley Street. Maurice stopped me and immediately began talking. "K. it is strange that you should have written a book about an Ark", he said. "What made you do that?"

"I wrote the *Log of the Ark* because it seemed to me to be an excellent theme for a children's story," I answered. "And so it turned out to be, for as soon as I had got my animals aboard the Ark they took charge of both it and me, so that the story practically wrote itself." But why did Maurice take my Ark story so seriously, I wondered. His expression had suddenly become very serious. I put the question to him: "Why do you think it so strange that I should have written a children's story about the voyage of the Ark?"

"Because the Ark has always been the symbol of a refuge in times of danger and disaster. You see, K., Noah was specially warned of what was going to happen, and he immediately set about building what would shortly be required—an Ark. You may be interested to know K. that there are people, here in London, at the present moment, who are engaged in the same sort of work."

"What on earth do you mean?" I interrupted. "There's not

going to be another flood, is there? If there is, please book me a cabin in the Ark that your friends are building."

But Maurice did not laugh. If anything, he became graver than before.

"Not a flood, K. but other world-disasters in the shape of wars, revolutions and great upheavals. And on a much bigger scale than has ever happened on this earth before."

"I don't believe you", I replied, quietly but firmly. By now I was accustomed to Maurice's sudden and dramatic announcements, but in spite of this I could not help being a little impressed by the gravity, and by the sense of authority with which he had uttered his gloomy forebodings. "We are only just recovering from a World War", I protested. "And it is now apparent to anybody who has got any common sense at all that wars don't pay. Neither the vanquished nor the conquerors ever get anything out of a war, and the more sensible nations are at last learning this lesson. At last humanity is becoming a little wiser and is taking steps to avoid the madness of wars in the future. The League of Nations is not just an idea in the hands of a few idealists. It is a solid fact and its headquarters are at Geneva. The League of Nations will go into action as soon as any serious disagreements begin between the various nations."

Whilst we were talking we had been walking slowly towards Cavendish Square, but now I was suddenly compelled to stop. Maurice had gripped my arm very tightly and he had swung himself round in front of me. "It won't work K.", he exploded. "Men are machines and they possess no *will*. They are unable to *do* anything. They merely react. In other words, everything *happens*, for man. Leagues of Nations, Treaties, Pacts, Conventions, all of these diplomatic devices! Why, they all lead to nothing, K. They are only so much political furbishings on the World's stage. *There is going to be another World War, and on a much bigger scale than has ever happened before.*" Maurice then released my arm and we resumed our walk towards Oxford Street, but at a slower pace. For a long time we walked in silence.

"Who has prophesied all this?" I asked him.

"Gurdjieff".

Surely this was the name of the Russian mystic to whom Maurice Nicoll had gone soon after he had set up in Harley Street. How characteristic of him it had been for him to disappear thus at a critical moment in his career. He had taken his wife, together with an infant daughter, to some chateau at Fontainebleau called the Prieuré, and Gurdjieff was the name of the man who ran it. All that Maurice had afterwards told me about the place was that it was an 'Institute for the harmonious development of man', whatever that might mean. I remembered also that I had received a note from Maurice whilst he was at the chateau in which he invited me to pay him a visit there. But I had other, and more important things to do then than to be 'harmoniously developed' by a mysterious Russian. It would have been disastrous for me to have neglected my small practice, as Maurice had done, at so critical a moment in my professional career. I had therefore refused his invitation to go to Fontainebleau. All this I suddenly remembered, but I was so impressed by what Maurice had just said that I arranged to visit him that very evening and to hear more about it all, at his Hampstead flat.

We met there as arranged, and we resumed our conversation where it had been left off.

"Is this man, Gurdjieff, now in London?" I asked him.

"No, he's at Fontainebleau, but Ouspensky is in London."

"Who is this new man, Ouspensky?"

"He's a Russian follower of G.'s and he is holding some meetings in a house at Warwick Gardens, Kensington."

"What are these meetings about?"

"They are about Gurdjieff's ideas. Would you like to come to them? I think I could get permission for you to attend a meeting."

To go to a lecture given by a Russian refugee, who was not a Bolshevik—for I gathered that Ouspensky and Gurdjieff had both left Russia, for good, on account of the revolution there—would not commit me to anything. This being so, I answered that I should very much like to attend one of Ouspensky's meetings and to see what they were like. It was true, of course, that Kensington was full of plausible Messiahs, and that the whole of the Gurdjieff movement might well be a bogus one. On the other

hand his ideas might be interesting. It was arranged therefore that Maurice should let me know the time and the number of the house in Warwick Gardens where the Ouspensky meetings were being held.

Before we parted that night Maurice put on one of his solemn faces and said that he wanted to give me certain final instructions. "We do not know ourselves K." he began, out of the blue as it were. "And we have to start to know ourselves, that is to say, to *see* ourselves as we really are, and not as we imagine ourselves to be. I want you to begin *observing* yourself quietly, K., as though you were watching another person, about whom you knew very little. Just look at yourself without making any inner comments on what you see. Neither approve nor disapprove of what you have discovered. Observe yourself and what happens in yourself, and don't analyse or try to explain what you have just seen. You will be surprised at the things you discover in yourself, if you work in this way. We really *know* very little about ourselves. But we imagine that we know a great deal."

Four days later I received a note from Maurice informing me that there would be a meeting on Thursday evening, at eight o'clock, at a certain number in Warwick Gardens, and on the Thursday of the following week I found myself in Warwick Gardens searching for the right number on the badly lit front-doors of a row of houses with small gardens. At last I found the number I had been looking for and, in the company of two other people, I entered a small hall. In it, and seated at a tiny table, was a lady who asked for my name. She then referred to a list on the table and, on finding my name there, she smiled and told me it would be 'all right'. She had the high cheekbones of a Russian, and from the remark she made afterwards, to two other people who had followed me into the hall, I was satisfied that she had a strong sense of humour. It was reassuring to meet so pleasant and so genuine a person as this, on the threshold of what I felt to be a rather dubious intellectual and emotional adventure.

The ground-floor room I now entered was furnished with a number of chairs, a blackboard and a small table, on which rested the following articles—an empty glass, a carafe of water, a brass

ash-tray, a duster and a box of chalks. One small oil-painting of a fountain hung on the wall over the fire-place and, on the window-sill, stood a vase containing some sprigs of manifestly artificial blossoms, contrived out of small shells. People were now trickling into the room, in twos and threes, and they were seating themselves on the very uncomfortable chairs ranged in front of the speaker's table. My watch told me that the time for the start of the meeting had already passed, but Ouspensky had not yet appeared. A few whispers were now being exchanged, from time to time, between the members of the waiting audience, but the great majority of those present remained silent. They looked either straight in front of them or else, rather dismally, at their own feet. I took the opportunity to examine the features of these Kensington 'Ark-builders', in the hope of discovering some factor common to them all, a factor that would explain their presence in the room. On the whole they looked intelligent, and this was all that I could really say about them, at the moment. There was a slight preponderance in the audience of females over males, and the majority of the waiting people were middle-aged. Only six of them could be considered youthful, and I wondered what had brought these younger people to Warwick Gardens. Although I could not be certain of this, I suspected that it might be a disillusionment with life. In all probability they were disappointed with what life had to offer them, and some of them might even be a little disappointed also with themselves. Formerly such people would have found solace in the local church or chapel, but in this sceptical and scientific age they were no longer able to find there what they were seeking—some practical philosophy for living. The clergy merely repeated the same old theological doctrines and platitudes and urged the young people to have 'faith' in dogmas which the young people's reasons had long ago rejected. In contrast to this Ouspensky probably gave these sceptical young people what they were looking for, a practical philosophy of life. Or perhaps all that he actually accomplished was to divert their attention from themselves and their worries to something else. In all likelihood he supplied them with some idealistic form of philosophy which their heads, as well as their hearts, were able to accept. Not that

the philosophy which Maurice had propounded to me, his remarks about men being only machines and having no wills of their own sounded at all comforting. But then Maurice was apt to exaggerate, and it was quite possible that he was making Gurdjieff's teaching much bleaker than it actually was.

My thoughts about the younger members of the audience, and about their spiritual needs, were suddenly interrupted, for the door had opened very quietly and an exceedingly solid man, resembling a Russian bear, was now walking noiselessly into the room. He sat down on the speaker's chair, drew a paper out of his coat pocket, placed it on the desk and then carefully surveyed his audience. Next, he took the paper up from the table and peered at at it through his very strong glasses, holding the paper only a few inches from his eyes. After he had completed this preliminary performance he leaned back in his chair, looked at his audience, smiled, and uttered the single word, "Well".

I had expected a man very different in appearance from the one I now saw in front of me. Ouspensky looked much more like a lawyer, a school-master, or a scientist, than a poet and a mystic. He was solid, and he obviously had his feet firmly planted on the earth. He did not in the least resemble the picture I had painted of a mystic. A minute or two passed and then, as nobody had said anything, Ouspensky started to talk to us. I shall make no attempt to reproduce his Russian manner of speaking, but I shall put down on paper the meaning of his words, as clearly as I can.

He began his talk by saying that man attributed to himself many qualities which he did not actually possess. Man even believed that he possessed a permanent 'Self' or 'Master-I' by whom his thoughts, feelings and actions were controlled and integrated. This was, of course, an illusion that could be dispelled by even a small amount of self-observation. Ouspensky said that if one observed oneself dispassionately one saw within oneself not a single 'I' but a multitude of 'I's', many of which did, felt and said quite contradictory things. There was nothing that could possibly be called a permanent and sovereign 'self' within a man. Here Ouspensky rose from his chair, walked to the blackboard, drew a surprisingly good circle on it to represent a man,

and subdivided the circle into a great many small areas by drawing horizontal and vertical lines across it. In each of these small areas in the circle he inscribed the letter 'I'. His diagram now resembled a fly's eye, seen under a microscope. When he had completed his picture he announced: "This is a diagram of a man as he really is. He is possessed of innumerable 'I's' and they are always changing, so that one 'I' is there at one moment, and another 'I' at another moment. This is very confusing, both to the man himself and to other people as well". Then Ouspensky returned to his seat and invited questions.

"How long does an 'I' last?" asked somebody.

"It is impossible to say, for every thought, every desire, every sensation can say 'I' and then it can disappear into the background. A man may decide in the evening to reform his lazy habits and to get up much earlier next day, and he will be quite sincere when he announces this. But the 'I' that wakes up next morning is a different 'I' and it refuses to subscribe to another 'I's' plan. It has no intention to get up earlier than usual, and the man we are describing turns on his side and promptly goes off to sleep again."

"But why is it that we all seem to believe that we possess a single and permanent 'I'?" asked a thoughtful man with a grave intellectual face.

Ouspensky replied that this illusion was based chiefly on the fact that we possessed a single enduring body which we retained throughout our lives. We also went through life with one name, and these two permanent possessions produced in us an impression of unity which misled us.

Somebody then remarked that if Ouspensky's picture of man were a true one, then the situation was hopeless, for clearly there was nothing to be done about it. To this Ouspensky replied that the only possible remedy for our difficult situation was that we should eventually acquire in ourselves a permanent and Master-I. He told us that Gurdjieff had once likened a man to a house full of many servants, all working in the wrong places, the cook in the stables, the coachman in the kitchen, and the gardener in the nursery looking after the children. When anyone came to the house, rang the front door bell and asked to see the Master of the

house, the servant who was nearest the door and happened to open it immediately replied that *he* was the master. And he sincerely believed himself to be the master. The only remedy for this state of confusion was that a few of the more intelligent 'I's' should realize how disastrous it was, and should agree to band together in order to see what they could do about it. The first step would be to appoint a leader, a deputy-steward, whom they were all willing to obey and, if this succeeded, the deputy-steward would in course of time be replaced by a real steward. Eventually a Master might arrive at the house to assume charge of it, but his arrival could not be guaranteed.

"Who are these more responsible people in us?" asked someone. "I mean, what in us represents the steward, the deputy-steward and the Master?"

"Ah, that is something which some day you may discover for yourself, but not at present. All that you can do for the present is to see and to realize more fully the state of confusion in which you live."

Mr. Ouspensky's talk ended as suddenly as it had begun. He rose, beckoned to somebody in the audience, told him to follow him and then left the room. The strain of listening to Ouspensky's rather difficult English was suddenly relieved, and the audience broke up into a number of small, chattering groups. As I had nobody with whom to exchange ideas, I made my way back slowly into the hall and I inquired of the Russian lady I had met there previously, whether there would be a meeting at the same time next week. She replied with a smile: "We can never be sure of that, but if you will leave me your telephone number I'll let you know later." People were now squeezing past us in the small hall in order to reach the front door, and one couple who had recently gone out left the front door a little open behind them. This failure to close the door seemed to me to be of very little importance, but Mr. Ouspensky's secretary—I took the Russian lady to be his secretary—rose immediately to close it. Before doing this she requested four people talking together just outside the door to disperse. "Please talk somewhere else" she said. "You know that Mr. Ouspensky does not want attention drawn to his meetings."

"Why this need for secrecy?" I wondered. I recalled now that when Maurice had telephoned to me about the time and the place of the meeting he had added that nothing must be said about the meetings to anybody else. There was nothing illegal or improper or blasphemous about Gurdjieff's teaching, so why had it to be kept so secret? On the whole, I had been rather impressed by what I had heard. Ouspensky possessed a remarkably clear mind, and I had admired the skill with which he had dealt with the questions put to him. However poor his English might be, he immediately discerned what was in the questioner's mind and he then swooped on to the kernel of the question with an unerring aim. I liked also the severe way in which he had dealt with loose talk and also his contempt for words which were parading as ideas. The notion that man was a machine and that he reacted mechanically to the stimulations that he received from his environment was, of course, no new idea. It was the central tenet of the psychology of 'Behaviourism'. But there was a striking difference between the way in which Behaviourites handled this idea of automatism and the way in which Ouspensky and Maurice Nicoll handled it. The Behaviourists talked of man's mechanicalness as though it applied only to other people, whereas Ouspensky and Maurice were basing their statements on observations which they had made on *themselves*. The question that still puzzled me, as I was making my way back to Harley Street, was not the mechanical nature of man, but the motive which had brought the audience to Warwick Gardens. Why did those people go there? Surely not in order to hear so bleak a gospel as that of their own mechanicalness? I had previously assumed that Ouspensky was about to give his hearers something that would comfort them, some substitute for the religion which they had once possessed but had now lost. But what comfort would they derive from what we had just heard? It was too early for me to find any final answer to this question, but I might discover this next time. For I was determined to come again to Warwick Gardens in order to hear more about Gurdjieff's teaching.

II

LEVELS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

THE NEXT MEETING AT WARWICK GARDENS was a fortnight later, and not, as I had expected it to be, on the following week. I was told that the explanation of this delay was that Ouspensky had gone to Paris to see his own teacher, Gurdjieff. During the intervening week I took the opportunity to look up a certain passage I recalled in Hume's philosophy, a passage concerned with the nature of man's 'self'. The paragraphs in which I was interested formed part of Hume's repudiation of Berkeley's statement that a man had an 'intuitive knowledge' of his own 'self' or 'soul'. It is evident that Hume like Gurdjieff, did not believe in the existence of any central 'I' or dominating 'self', for he wrote:

For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself* I always stumble on some perception or other . . . I never catch myself.

This was almost identical with the way in which Ouspensky had put the matter to us. He had said that when anyone turned his attention inwards and examined more carefully what he took to be 'himself' it turned out to be nothing more stable than a fleeting thought, a perception or a passing emotion. Of the 'self' of which Berkeley had stated that it was sensed '*intuitively*' Hume had no knowledge. Having looked inside myself and having observed myself by the method which Maurice Nicoll had advocated, I was never able to discover anything there which could possibly be regarded as constituting a permanent 'self'. Like Hume I

discovered only makeshift 'selves' composed of transitory perceptions, movements, sensations, thoughts and emotions.

Ouspensky was even later in entering the room on the next occasion than he had been at the previous meeting. Yet it was clear to me that he had been somewhere in the building all the time, for every now and then the secretary had entered the room and had beckoned to someone to come out of it. It looked as though these people were being summoned to private interviews with Ouspensky. At last he did appear, and he then went through the same preliminary performance of surveying the audience, of peering at his notes, and of uttering the word 'Well'. Again there was silence, and again Ouspensky started the talking. This time he began by saying that there were many different ways of describing man and that tonight he was going to talk of a certain division of man which was of very great practical importance. Each of us was made up of two parts which he would call our Essence and our Personality. Our *Essences* embraced everything with which we were born, our inherited characteristics, our dispositions and our physical attributes. *Personalities* were artificial and accidental things which were acquired afterwards and were mainly the products of our education and of our upbringing. Our Personalities were determined by our surroundings and by the people whom we happened to meet as children and adolescents, and, in consequence of this, Personalities were almost entirely accidental accretions. Our Personalities were the much less *real* part of ourselves, and they were also characteristics in ourselves which altered with changing circumstances. Personalities grew very rapidly, overwhelmed Essence, and became the parts of ourselves which were really in charge of us.

Personality grew at the expense of Essence and a man with a strong Personality often possessed the underdeveloped Essence of a child of ten. When therefore we spoke of a man's inner development we were referring to the development of the more real part of a man, his Essence. In order that a man's Essence might have a reasonably good chance of developing, his Personality had to be rendered much more passive. To quote Ouspensky's words: "If your name is Smith or Brown you will often

have to work against 'Smith' or 'Brown' in order to develop your Essence. At first you will have great difficulty in distinguishing between what belongs to your Essence and what belongs to your Personality, and at the start it will be better for you to attribute almost everything you discover in yourself to your Personality. There are certain narcotic drugs which have the special property of putting Personality temporarily to sleep, and of thus allowing a man's Essence to reveal itself more clearly."

Ouspensky then went on to say that Personality and Essence were, in some people, opposed to one another, and that when this happened the life of that individual was rendered rather difficult. For example a woman who was leading a highly social life, and who had become a great hostess and a leader of fashion in a big city, might, in her Essence, be a very simple country-loving kind of individual. This being so she would be much happier if she were to listen to the desires of her Essence and were to leave London and to live a simple rural life. But, continued Ouspensky, "Personality is a very necessary part of ourselves, without which we should find it impossible to live. What is required of us is not that our Personalities should be eliminated altogether, but that we should try to render them much less active. Essence will then be enabled to grow and this is a necessary preliminary to all inner changes of a permanent and desirable nature." Ouspensky also pointed out that Personality was usually much more highly developed and more active in town-dwellers than in country people. It was particularly active amongst the 'high-brows' and the intellectuals and, instinctively we usually realized that these clever people were less genuine and less reliable than were simple country fok who lived more in their Essences.

Ouspensky then went on to describe another division which could be made in man, a division which would be of more practical value to us, at present, than the division which he had just made into Essence and Personality. He said that an individual who was really working in the hope of first knowing himself and of later effecting some inner change in himself could be divided into the small part possessed of this aim, and all the rest of himself. Ouspensky called this the division between 'I' and Smith, or

whatever the man's name happened to be. He said that the actual experiencing of these two different parts of ourselves could be called an act of 'separation'. To 'separate' for a moment or two from Smith or Ouspensky represented a brief freedom from the tyrant who was almost always in charge of ourselves—our Personalities. "But" he added, "a subtle danger lurks in these highly important moments of 'separation'. Although a genuine observing 'I' may have been present at the very start of this process of separation, it may be later superseded by something in ourselves which is much less genuine and reliable than the original observing 'I' was. The observing may be continued by a 'Smith' or an 'Ouspensky' who is not really observing anything at all but is dreaming about himself in the rôle of a fully conscious being."

I struggled to follow Ouspensky's instruction during the following weeks and tried hard to bring about these acts of 'separation'. In course of time they became of increasing importance to me, and of greater and greater duration and value. This does not mean that I was able to carry out these acts of separation, and to appreciate their practical value from the very start. On the contrary, many years had to pass before I appreciated the striking difference between the real 'I' who appeared at such times and the ordinary everyday Mr. Kenneth Walker. Fortunately Ouspensky spoke at the next two meetings of another aspect of the same subject, namely of the existence in us of many different levels of consciousness; and the two ideas, of the existence of higher levels of consciousness and of the separation which can be brought about by a special effort, are very closely related to one another. Because of this it will be convenient to end this chapter by discussing the first of these closely related ideas, namely the idea of various levels of consciousness.

Ouspensky introduced to us the subject of 'consciousness' with a startling abruptness. "Man is asleep" he began. "In sleep he is born, in sleep he lives, and in sleep he dies. In other words, man's life is a sleep from which he never awakes except momentarily". After all these years I am unable to recall how I, personally, took this dramatic beginning to Ouspensky's talk about consciousness but, so far as I can remember, it occasioned me no

very great surprise. It did not surprise me because it was not the first time that I had heard a statement of this nature. Had not old Chang Tzu said much the same thing many centuries before Ouspensky had said it? I called to mind one of the stories told by this old Chinese philosopher, a story in which he states that he fell asleep whilst he was sitting in his garden, and in which he dreamed that he was a butterfly fluttering about, hither and thither. Then he suddenly awoke and found that he was actually a man. He ends his story with the remark, "Now, I do not know whether I was *then* a man dreaming I was a butterfly, or whether I am now a butterfly dreaming that I am a man."

And indeed this dream-like quality of our lives is highly confusing to a great many people. What adds to the muddle is that in the West the word 'consciousness' has been, and still is, used very loosely, not only in popular speech, but also by those who should know better, certain psychologists. Consciousness is not thought, emotion or any other function, it is *awareness* of ourselves. Thought often takes place within us without our being in the least aware of it. There can also be consciousness without any thought, and this consciousness without thought, is a description of all *higher* states of consciousness. It is the mechanical stream of associative thinking, going on all the time within us, which is one of the chief obstacles to our attaining a higher level of consciousness. But of this struggle to reach a higher level of awareness more will have to be said later.

Ouspensky often used the simile of 'light' when talking about consciousness. He said that we lived on so low a level of consciousness that the most appropriate term for it was 'waking-sleep'. For the performance of many of our activities this low level of consciousness was adequate, but it did not permit of our exercising any real control over our functions. We resembled factories which were full of workers who managed to do their jobs in even semi-darkness but who would work much better if a little more light were sometimes admitted into the workrooms. Ouspensky said that only at rare moments did we become aware of our existence and of what we were doing, thinking or feeling. Then a minute or two later we went off to sleep again and worked, thought and

felt without our being conscious of what was happening within and without ourselves.

Ouspensky then said that four states of consciousness were possible for men, and that we were familiar with only two of them, namely with sleep at night, and with what we called our waking state. He proposed to call the latter a state of 'waking-sleep'. Above this level of consciousness there was a third state which we might reach by special efforts to 'remember ourselves'. 'Self-remembering' was associated with a vivid sense of our existence and by a heightened awareness of what was happening, both within and without ourselves, at that particular moment of time. He said that experiences of 'self-remembering' or of 'coming to' often occurred accidentally. These were particularly liable to occur during our childhood for, as we grew older, and became more tightly shut up in the prison of our Personalities, these accidental moments of awakening were likely to become rarer and rarer. Nevertheless man had the right to possess this third state of consciousness which had been lost through wrong methods of education, and through wrong modes of living. Our daytime sleep was not a *natural* sleep like our sleep at night, but it resembled rather a sleep which had been imposed on a person by hypnotism, or by taking some drug. Above the level of true self-awarenesss there existed two *higher* levels of consciousness which Ouspensky called the levels of consciousness belonging to higher emotional and higher intellectual centres. He said that accounts of these two higher levels of consciousness could be found in the writings of the mystics.

Ouspensky's description of consciousness and of its different levels had a great emotional effect on me, for I knew what he was talking about. Now, for the first time in my life, I had been given a satisfactory explanation of something that had happened to me long ago, when I was about eight years old. I have given a previous account of my sudden experience of the third state of consciousness, that is to say of the state of true Self-consciousness in a book, now out of print, entitled *The Intruder*. Like most spontaneous experiences of the third level of consciousness, it came to me unexpectedly, and apparently by accident. The

following is my account of it, as previously given in *The Intruder*:

The occasion was a visit of my family to a certain Mr. Bushby who lived at Rustington. A comfortable and respectable vehicle, suitably named a Victoria, had been hired for the purpose of conveying my parents, my sister and myself from Littlehampton to Rustington. A visit to Mr. Bushby always provided us with an enjoyable outing, for this old squire lived in a large house on the outskirts of the village of Rustington, a house that was surrounded by many acres of garden, park and grazing land. One could visit the cowsheds and watch the cows splashing streams of frothy milk into pails, or, one could wander in the garden and find the pond in which goldfish could be seen fanning themselves under the shelter of overhanging rocks. One was even allowed to drop in front of their noses tempting lumps of dough moulded on to bent pins, and, if one was very lucky, one could land them on the lawn, glittering and gasping. Over all these possessions, reigned Mr. Bushby himself, a large and kindly man, with a face like a bird's nest, and with clothes that gave out a pleasant earthy smell.

This particular visit had turned out to be a specially good one, and seated between my parents, on the return journey to Littlehampton, my mind dwelt pleasantly on all the events of the afternoon. Not only had I explored hitherto inaccessible corners of Mr. Bushby's garden, but I had been allowed to touch the rubbery udder of a cow and, best of all, I had been lucky enough to land three large goldfishes. They were actually there beneath the seat in a funny tin with a perforated top, my own property, to do with as I liked. Glimpses of trees, stretches of lawn, French windows opening on to a room in which a lovely tea was spread, all these scenes passed through my mind, like the dissolving views of my father's magic-lantern. Mixed with them were thoughts of Indians, wild animals behind bushes, and a host of imaginary things that had become so mixed up with Mr. Bushby's garden that it would have been difficult, had I wanted to do so, to separate what was real from what was the offspring of my fancy. Then suddenly I realized that everything in me had changed. The streams of mental images had abruptly stopped, as though the light in the magic lantern had fused, and there I was, a little boy, sitting in a Victoria, at a bend in the road, and staring at the buttons on the back of the coachman's coat. I, and all this other that was not I! How strange! My mother had smiled at me, a long way off, and had pushed the end of the muffler under my coat, but

I was there alone, by myself. What did it mean, this new sense of isolation, this acute feeling of my own separate existence? I was rather frightened and in my heart I knew that here was a question to which the clever grown-up people could give no answer. I was face to face with the great mystery of my own existence and like a person who has been suddenly awakened out of sleep to find himself in strange surroundings, I felt mightily afraid. The intense sense of my own existence was so novel that I felt like a person who has suddenly awakened to find himself alone. It was all rather frightening and I wanted to get down to the familiar valley lying far below me, where I could dream my old dreams and could live as I had always lived. My wish was very soon granted. The fuse in the magic lantern had mended itself and streams of pleasant and reassuring images carried me back again into the dream-world to which I really belonged.

The minute or two of intensified being had passed, but like a sun that has sunk below the horizon it had left behind it a strange glow of light in the sky. For a moment I had stepped over the threshold of ordinary existence and I could never feel the same about myself and about the business of living as I had felt before. There were mysteries concerning which grown-up people did not talk, not because talk about them was forbidden, but because nothing could be said about them. Somehow God was connected with the different world into which I had strayed for a few brief minutes. Not the schoolmaster-God who either approved or disapproved of my conduct, the God of whom my grandmother was always speaking—a rather tiresome interfering sort of God, but 'Something' so big and so difficult to grasp that it was beyond my power to speak of it. What was this 'I' that I had felt, this different state in which all the more familiar aspects of my life had become for the moment like the shadowy figures of a dream? Who was I and why? What was I supposed to be doing on this earth? I waited but there came back no answer. Perhaps someday I should meet someone who would tell me what it all meant, or perhaps by sheer hard climbing up great pinnacles of thought, I *myself* would find the right answer to this question. Meanwhile there was a great deal to be done, and I could forget about the world into which I had strayed. But could I really forget about it

in that silly way? On the whole I managed to do this, for only at times did a sense of the mystery of my existence stir in me, so that I would suddenly stop in my play and would stand there waiting as though I were listening for an answer that never came. What was this great wave of feeling which came over me sometimes and which swept me through the vast regions of the stars, to drop me again, dazed and humbled on the level of the earth? I never found the answer to this big question.

As I grew older these moments of 'wandering' and 'wondering' became rarer and rarer, but when they did come they always remained deeply imprinted on my memory. Wonder dies quickly within us as we grow up and, as adults, we swallow mysteries as casually as we swallow cups of tea, without any thought of their meaning. Everything becomes commonplace and public schools do not encourage speculation about subjects which are not on the official syllabus. Consequently my experience of higher levels of consciousness were pushed into a remote corner of my mind. Like all healthy-minded schoolboys I went soundly to sleep and rarely experienced the sense of my existence. After all, it was a mistake to look inside oneself too much, when there was so much of immense interest to see in the world outside oneself. But now, Ouspensky's talk about different levels of consciousness had suddenly brought the whole matter back again into my mind. He had revived old memories and had provided me with a satisfactory explanation of what had happened to me after my visit to Mr. Bushby's garden at Rustington. Not only had he done this but he had actually encouraged me to make deliberate attempts to disengage myself, for a moment or two, from all the entanglements of life, and to try to rediscover that more real Self within me by means of 'self-remembering'. But I could not help feeling that the term 'self-*remembering*', that he had used was an unsatisfactory one. To 'remember' in the ordinary way, is to recall to mind some impressions of the *past* whilst the effort which Ouspensky was now requiring of us was to become aware of the *actual moment* in which we were living, and not to recall to mind some moment that had disappeared.

So also did I feel it necessary to be clearer about the 'Self'

which had to be 'remembered' or retrieved from oblivion in this way. I found that Western psychology was of very little help to me in deciding this important question about the nature of the more genuine 'self'. This being so, I consulted the more clearly formulated psychology of the East, and particularly the psychology upon which the Vedas and the Upanishads are based. I found that the great Hindu commentator on the Vedas, Shankara, began with the statement that the " 'Self' is both known and unknown". He writes:

We know that the 'self' exists, but we do not know what it is. Nor can we ever hope to know the 'self' by means of *thought*, since thought is part of the flux of psychic states belonging to the region of the non-self.

Shankara then advises those who feel the need for a definition of the real and greater 'self' (as I did) to picture it in terms of pure *Undifferentiated Consciousness*. He states that this is a Consciousness which will remain unaffected even when the 'body' has been reduced to ashes and when the 'mind' has completely disappeared.

Just as a man erroneously looks upon his body placed in the sunlight as having the property of light in it, so does he look upon the intellect when pervaded with the reflection of pure Consciousness as the 'Self' or the 'Witness' . . . The Self gets identified with whatever is seen in the world. It is for this reason that an ignorant man does not know himself to be Brahman.

Shankara's description of the 'self' completely satisfied me, and privately, I substituted the term 'self realization' for Ouspensky's official term, 'self-remembering'. I also discovered many descriptions of experiences of 'self-remembering' amongst writers and poets. Carlyle, Wordsworth and Tennyson have all left accounts of certain moments in their lives when the level of their self-awareness rose above its customary level, so that they were given glimpses of something which was far more real than the dreams and the chatterings of their own personalities. I shall quote here only Carlyle on this subject. He writes of his experience of a rise in the level of his consciousness as follows:

There come seasons, meditative, sweet yet awful hours, when in wonder and fear you ask yourself that unanswerable question "Who am I, the thing that can say 'I'? The world with its loud trafficking retires into the distance; and through the paper-hangings and stone walls, and thick piled tissues of Commerce and Polity, and all the living and lifeless integuments (of Society and of a Body) wherewith your experience is surrounded—the sight reaches into the void and you are alone with the Universe and commune with it, as one mysterious Presence with another.

This is an admirable description of an accidental raising of the level of consciousness and the only surprising feature in it is the use of the word 'awful' in the first sentence. Did Carlyle mean 'awesome', that is to say something which is worthy of respect? Or was he actually frightened, when, for a moment or two, his ordinary everyday-self was replaced by that much greater 'Self' to which the Hindus give a capital S, a Self which is capable of communing with the universe? He was undoubtedly surprised when this happened for the first time, but if he had persevered with his meditations, if he had deliberately sought those moments of communion with something far greater than his own petty personality, all fear would have gone.

What is this Greater Self which appears at such times, and which illuminates the trivialites of the everday-self? The Hindus call it the Atman and the Buddhists sometimes refer to it as the Witness. It is pure Consciousness without thought, a form of Consciousness in which the usual subject-object relationship is entirely lost and in which things are perceived *directly*. It illuminates what the Vedanta calls "All illusory entities from the *external* object to the internal 'ego' or void". The Vedanta anlyses the non-Self into the five *Koras* or *sheaths*, such as the gross physical sheath of the *body*, the sheath of the *mind*, the sheath of the *buddhi* or intelligence and the sheath of *bliss*. They are called sheaths because they conceal the Atman or true Self within man.

I have fallen back on the Vedanta because Gurdjieff's system has no exact terms with which to define what lies within one and is seen in moments of higher consciousness. There can be no doubt also that Gurdjieff and his fellow seekers of the truth derived much

of their philosophy and psychology from Indian sources. For example the 'system' regards everything in man, including such finer characteristics as his mind, as being composed of finer forms of matter. In doing this it is in harmony with the Advaita or non-dualistic philosophy of Sankara, the philosophy which declares that all of the *Koras* of man are formed out of modifications of *prakriti* or primordial matter.

But what is of far greater importance than finding a suitable terminology in which to describe higher levels of consciousness is that we should have an actual *experience* of what happens when we withdraw for a moment or two from the constant chatter within us and establish contact with that majestic inner Silence which the Hindus call 'Consciousness without thought'. This was what Ouspensky was urging us to do when he told us to observe the variations occurring in the level of consciousness throughout the day. I found his instructions on this subject of great practical value. Hitherto I had taken my consciousness for granted. But now I made the astonishing discovery that I was very seldom 'aware' of myself and of what I was doing. I found that at one moment my inner world was a chaos of dreams, of old memories, of inner chatter, and of dissolving views and then, quite suddenly, all this confusion would die down and I would 'come to', in the way that my patients 'came to' when the anaesthetist removed the anaesthetic mask from their faces. I was astonished by the great fluctuations which took place during the day in a commodity which hitherto I had assumed to be more or less constant in me—my own consciousness.

Ouspensky's discussion of the meaning of the word 'consciousness' also proved very helpful to me. The word consciousness is derived from the Latin verb '*conscire*' to 'know things together' and the extent to which we are able to relate several things to one another provides us with another gauge of our awareness. The more conscious we are the greater will be the number of things we are able to see at one and the same time. This is of great importance to us because seeing things *together* means that we are able to grasp their relationship.

At a later date I was able to understand better the medical

aspects of the changes which were occurring in the level of my consciousness during my waking hours. In his book, *Living Time*, published in 1925, Maurice Nicoll draws attention to the neurological implications of the fluctuations which take place in the level of an individual's consciousness. He begins by pointing out that, from a neurologist's point of view, man's central nervous system is a structure formed out of many different groupings of nerve cells, all of which are closely linked together, and all of which play an appropriate part in the functioning of that great hierarchy of nerve cells known as the central nervous system. The many different groupings of nerve-cells in this system are presided over by the highest grouping of all, namely the group of nerve-cells situated in the brain cortex.

The next question which arises is how this highest grouping of nerve-cells may be said to function from the standpoint of the psychologist rather than of the neurologist? Here Nicoll enlists the help of that brilliant pioneer of British neurology, Hughlings Jackson. This great authority taught that when the control of the *higher* centres in the brain are weakened in any way, the activity of the *lower* centres are thereby released, with the result that a *lower* function takes the place of a *higher* one. Hughlings Jackson was of the opinion that this *release* phenomenon, as he called it, explained many of the symptoms displayed by patients suffering from various nervous disorders and Nicoll helps us to understand what Hughlings Jackson meant by a 'release' phenomenon by means of the following analogy. He writes:

Imagine a schoolmaster in charge of a class of boys and suppose that the schoolmaster represents a higher level and the boys a lower level, the whole class of schoolmaster and boys, working together in a certain way. If the schoolmaster goes to sleep in the classroom, the lower level is 'released'—that is to say, the boys behave just as they like, and the whole school system works in quite a *different* way.

This is due, not so much to the schoolmaster being asleep, as to the fact that the boys are released from his control, with the resulting class disorder. In other words, if a *higher* level of the nervous system is not working, *the absence of its functioning cannot be discerned in itself* (directly). It will only be the *released* activity of the *lower* levels that

will be manifested, and this alone is capable of being studied. The function of the *higher* level will merely be absent, *and it will be impossible to deduce its nature* because we will only be able to perceive, and to study the 'released' activities of a *lower* level.

Hughlings Jackson has demonstrated here the clinical fact that when the level of ordinary consciousness is lowered there will be a marked increase of 'dreamlike' states, a change which can be explained by the *release* of the activities of a lower level. This is precisely what happens to a person who is observing the changes which are occurring in the level of his own consciousness. Whenever his attention is distracted from this task of 'self-observation' a dream-like state immediately takes possession of him, so that any feeling of 'I' which he may previously have had entirely disappears.

My own way of describing a person's efforts to meditate would be to say that he is struggling to get through the noisy, chattering periphery of his mind, and to reach the silent area which lies beyond it. This silent area, in the distance, is the area of higher consciousness which the Hindu calls 'pure consciousness without thought'. What prevents us from attaining that silent and more conscious area? It is the garrulous commentator who lives within our heads, that strident voice in us which is so terribly difficult to silence. Instead of helping us to reach our goal of inner silence, this ceaseless chatterer in our mind pours out a stream of associative and mechanical thoughts, a chatter which is clearly a 'release' phenomenon. Because the schoolmaster within us is absent for a short time, the boys are able to talk and to shout to their hearts' content. If the schoolmaster were to be absent for a long time, the boys might get tired of all this, might drop off to sleep and might dream their boyish dreams.

Those who travel on 'the way of the monk' recognize how difficult it is to attain the goal of inner silence whilst remaining in the ordinary world and whilst in the company of other men and women. In such an environment as this meditation is continually being disturbed by the constant flow of sensory messages from the outer world. It is for this reason that many men and women of a religious temperament have retired from the ordinary world,

and have shut themselves up in monasteries and convents. By withdrawing thus and by directing their attention inwards, these men and women have made the great discovery that reality lies *within* themselves, that is to say in the world of consciousness rather than in the external world around them. On these grounds alone the existence of monasteries and convents has been fully justified. Contemplation and meditation demand of those who practice these disciplines, a complete withdrawal from the mechanical impressions and reactions of everyday life. In order to escape from the latter monks and nuns withdraw into the quiet and seclusion of their cells whenever the time has come for them to carry out their daily religious practices. Their method of inner development is the method which Gurdjieff called the 'way of the monk' and this being so it is not the method which we are studying in this book. Gurdjieff's method of inner development makes use of some of the practices of the monk and of some of the methods employed by the yogi. It occasionally employs the methods used by the fakir in obtaining control over his body. But the main difference between Gurdjieff's methods and those used by the monk, the yogi and the fakir is that instead of withdrawing from life, the follower of the Fourth Way makes use of life and its difficulties as the material on which he works. Ouspensky tells us that Gurdjieff sometimes called the system of ideas he taught an esoteric form of Christianity. He pointed out that frequent references were made in the Gospels to the ideas of man's being asleep and to the need for him to awaken and become watchful. Christ also said to Nicodemus that man had to be 'born again' on to a higher state of being. But before this rebirth was possible a great deal in man had to die. In other words he had to free himself from a thousand petty attachments and identifications which kept him in his present state of slavery. These harmful attachments and identifications preserved the lives of many 'I's' in him which stood in the way of his spiritual growth. Gurdjieff described three stages in the process of freeing a man from useless parts of himself. The first stage in his liberation was that he should see himself as he actually was, the second that he should realize his nothingness, and the third that he should be

willing to die, and thus allow of his being reborn. The closeness of these ideas of Gurdjieff's to the Christian idea of the death of the old Adam and the birth in man of something new is obvious. But according to Gurdjieff's system it is only that part of a man's personality which is purely imaginary, and therefore incompatible with man's further development, that has to be sacrificed. The rest of him can survive but it must be rendered much more passive and submissive to the rulings of the spiritual elements in man. Previously a man has been ruled by his likes and his dislikes, by his many identifications, by his petty conceits about himself, by the necessity of proving himself always to be right, by the need for his merits to be recognized by others, and by a general desire for appreciation. Henceforth he must renounce all these requirements and, by so doing, liberate himself from his psychological bondage. Only then will it be possible for him to attain a higher level of being, and at the same time gain a greater degree of understanding.

III

ESSENCE AND PERSONALITY

THE FOLLOWING WEEK Ouspensky returned to a division in man which he had mentioned at a previous meeting, namely, the division into Essence and Personality. He told us that, according to Gurdjieff, an infant had no Personality at all. He was all Essence and this meant that his 'likes' and his 'dislikes', his 'tastes' and his 'impulses' were instinctive, and consequently his own. But with the start of education there also began the development of the infant's Personality. New ideas and new tastes, impulses and modes of behaviour were implanted into him by his parents, and by those responsible for his education. His imitation of the people he admired also played a very important part in the formation of his Personality. 'Let's pretend' are words uttered by children very early in their lives, for they are passwords to a new and exciting world of games. Children are 'born actors' and they throw themselves, heart and soul, into the roles which happen to appeal to them, and play them with immense gusto. Indeed they play them so whole-heartedly that any division which previously existed between their acting and their real lives completely disappears. In other words, acting and living soon become one and the same thing for the growing child. He *is* what he imagines himself to be.

Ouspensky encouraged us to get to 'know ourselves', and as we are almost entirely controlled by our Personalities this meant getting to know our Personalities. To know oneself takes a long

time, but after many years of self-observation a great deal of my Personality has been revealed to me. What an odd assortment of characteristics, of thinkings, feelings and modes of behaviour I have accumulated in the course of my life. Looking back, as I now do at the long, receding line of my life, I have reached the conclusion that I have *been lived* rather than that I have *lived.* Yes, I have been lived by an accomplished troop of actors of whom I have already given an account in a previous book called *I Talk of Dreams.* In the present book I am only going to mention *one* of the several actors who have played leading parts in the running of my life, namely the mighty hunter of lions, Selous. But before introducing to your notice this intrepid big-game hunter, I should like to call attention to the fact that the roles which my Personality has selected for me to play have demanded of me the expenditure of very little ingenuity. It has been enough that I should have met the person on whom I was to model myself or that I should have read about him in a book. The whole thing has then been arranged for me by my Personality, with or without the approval of that more genuine part of myself which Gurdjieff called Essence.

An example of how such things happen will make this clearer. On a low shelf of my father's bookcase, so low that, as a very small boy, I could read the title, take the book out of the bookcase and look at its pictures, was a certain big yellow volume. The writer of this book was Selous, a very well-known big-game hunter of the Victorian Age. His big-game shooting exploits, in Africa, exercised an immense influence over me, and, as I read about my hero, my own behaviour became more and more like his. My father had actually met and had talked with Selous when he was in Africa, on a business trip, and this somehow made everything in Selous's book more real. It also rendered my own games and play-acting about lions and wild elephants much more genuine for me. When I went out into the garden and stalked lions there, amongst the bushes behind the bicycle shed, as I frequently did, I wasn't playing a game—I was stalking real lions in Africa. But as a boy grows older, so also does his Personality become more demanding about the scenery in which he is

performing his play-acting. There came a time when bicycle sheds and bushes in a London garden no longer met the requirements of a Personality that had now reached the later twenties. At that mature age I required for my big-game drama something better suited to my years than a suburban garden, and it was at this point that accident stepped in and supplied me with my theatrical needs. I met a certain person, a few years older than myself, who required a companion for a shooting trip in Kenya. I promptly applied for the job and I obtained it. So, with the help of Mafoota (the Swahili name which was given to my new friend by our safari porters), Kenneth Walker did actually stalk lions in Africa, and in the correct surroundings, with the result that his Personality became more convinced than ever that he was a genuine hunter of big-game. And for an hour or so, on a very dark, moonless night in the neighbourhood of the Great Rift Valley, it might be said that Kenneth Walker did actually leave the realm of fantasy and become in actual fact a genuine hunter of lions. The story of it runs as follows. Our camp was raided on that moonless night by a man-eating lion, a tent in which four of our men were sleeping was knocked down by it, and one of the four sleeping porters was now missing! But my face-to-face encounter with a lion bearing our stoutest porter in his mouth is what Rudyard Kipling would have called 'another story', a tale which cannot be re-told in the present book. It cannot be re-told because the sole reason why Selous has found a place in the book I am now writing is that he shows how big a part our imaginations play in the making of our Personalities.

According to Gurdjieff, these less genuine parts of ourselves, our Personalities, grow much more rapidly than our Essences grow. Indeed, the development of the former is so rapid that it swamps, as it were, the growth of our Essences, so that, in the end, it is our Personalities which assume almost complete control over us. We do what our Personalities dictate that we should do, and we very seldom hear the faint promptings of our Essences coming from below. As a result of all this, Essence ceases to grow at a comparatively early age of our lives. Gurdjieff told his Moscow group that there were many middle-aged people whose

Essences had ceased growing at such an early age that the people possessed only the Essences of children of nine or ten. This very early cessation of the growth of Essence is more likely to occur in town- and in city-dwellers than in country folk. Country people live much closer to nature than town-dwellers do, and they are less artificial in their thoughts, their ways and their manners. They may have fewer ideas in their heads than those who life in cities, but the ideas which they possess are much more real. We instinctively feel that country people are usually more genuine than are town-dwellers when we talk to them.

The fact that there is so much that is imitative and artificial in our Personalities does not mean that our Personalities ought to be eliminated, if it were possible to do this. Actually we could never rid ourselves entirely of our Personalities and, if we did, living would become very difficult without the occasional help of this part of us. Our Personalities serve a definite purpose in our lives. We all have our roles to play in life, and our Personalities provide us with the means of doing this. For example, we have our professional and our business roles to play, and also our private roles as husbands, wives and parents. And it is our duty to do what is expected of us in life and to carry out these obligations to the best of our ability. But if we are to evolve inwardly we have to render our Personalities much more passive than they are at present, so that, eventually, we may be able to exercise a greater control over our behaviour. If we struggle hard enough, and for long enough, the day may come when it is *we* who are playing our roles instead of they who are in complete charge of us. Many years later I was fortunate enough to establish personal contact with that remarkable man Gurdjieff, and after watching his behaviour very closely, I came to the conclusion that he was able to select the role best suited to his dealings with any particular person. In other words he was able to choose and to play his roles *consciously*. This was of immense advantage to him. After the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, Gurdjieff was compelled to leave Russia, together with the members of his Moscow and St. Petersburg groups, and whilst they were making their way slowly towards Constantinople they frequently encountered both Red and

White Russian troops, at war with one another. Gurdjieff's followers were often taken prisoner and were detained by these troops but Gurdjieff knew what to do, and he did it superbly well. He told me, when I talked to him in Paris that he still possessed two different Russian documents entitling him to travel and to bear arms. The first was a document signed by an officer of the Red Army, and the second was a similar document signed by an officer of the White Army. Gurdjieff played his role as a Red or as a White Russian sympathizer so skilfully that he even managed to get from his captors the loan of Army lorries with which to transport himself and his party, together with their equipment, in the direction of Constantinople. If Gurdjieff's Personality had been in charge of *him* on these occasions, both he and his followers would in all probability have been shot.

Whilst talking to us on the subject of Essence and Personality, Ouspensky told us that there existed methods by which the relationship between a man's Personality and his Essence could be demonstrated. Personality could be put to sleep temporarily by means of hypnotic suggestion, so that Essence was able to reveal itself. Or the same thing could be accomplished more easily by giving certain narcotic drugs. Ouspensky told us that Gurdjieff had used this second method of demonstrating to others the Essence of certain volunteer members of his Russian group. His experiments had demonstrated to those who watched them that some very complicated people who were full of likes and dislikes, approvals and disapprovals, became quite simple characters whilst under the influence of these drugs. Simplicity was a feature of their Essences and Gurdjieff's experiments revealed the fact that a man with a highly developed Personality might possess the Essence of a child, eight years of age. Before taking the drug the subject of the experiment had been full of exalted ideas, sympathies and antipathies, loves and hatreds, habits, tastes and convictions, but after he had taken it, and after his Personality had been put to sleep, he lost all his previous convictions, feelings and thoughts. Causes for which he would previously have sacrificed his life now appeared to him to be almost worthless, or at any rate very trivial matters. All that he still retained whilst under

the drug's influence, was a small number of desires of an instinctive nature. For example, he was fond of sweets, he hated the cold and he was disinclined to take much exercise. A mature Essence was comparatively seldom found in the subjects of these experiments, and when it was found it was usually discovered in quite an unexpected individual. Ouspensky said that in the great majority of people Essence was either of a rather primitive, savage and childish nature, or else it was inclined to be stupid. This was not at all surprising when we remembered the fact that the development of Essence depended mainly on a man's own inner work on himself. A man's real 'I' can only grow from a man's Essence. Ouspensky ended his talk on this subject of Personality and Essence by saying that an important moment for an individual who was struggling to render his Personality more passive was the moment when he began to distinguish between the things which had originated in his Essence and the things which came from his Personality. It was also important for us all to remember that a man's real 'I' could grow only from his Essence and that the latter could only attain its maturity if the constant pressure exerted on it by the Personality were reduced. This was no easy matter for the very last thing that Society encouraged in an individual was a weakening of his Personality. Indeed Society, did everything it could to encourage the growth of poses and mannerisms and such places as Hollywood could be regarded as being Academies for the intensive cultivation of Personalities, at the expense of the growth of Essences. Such a cultivation is entirely unnecessary for the growth of our Personalities is already excessive and our aim lay rather in the opposite direction. We should try to render our Personalities less active so that the more real parts of ourselves, our Essences, could grow.

IV

A PRIVATE TALK WITH OUSPENSKY

OUSPENSKY'S TALK ON DIFFERENT LEVELS of consciousness had made a deep impression on me and I was now beginning to look upon my weekly visits to Warwick Gardens as amongst the most important of all my engagements. It was no longer necessary for Maurice Nicoll, or for anybody else, to assure me that there were ideas of great importance and value to be found in Gurdjieff's teaching. What I had liked about Ouspensky was that he had never demanded of his increasing numbers of followers any blind 'faith'. All that was required of them was that they should submit the psychological ideas which he gave to them to a practical test, and that they should discover for themselves whether or not they were true ideas. As has previously been said, Ouspensky saw a number of people in his private room at Warwick Gardens, both before and after the meetings, and although I had not come up against any special difficulties or required Ouspensky's private help, I felt that it would be useful tor me to establish some sort of personal contact with my teacher. I therefore asked his secretary, Madame Kadlabovsky, whether I could see him privately. She returned with the message that he would be glad to see me, not at Warwick Gardens, but at Gwendyr Road, where he lived. Could I call on him there at five o'clock on Thursday afternoon? I gladly accepted this invitation.

On Thursday afternoon I rang the bell of a rather sombre Victorian house in an equally dismal road, and the door was

opened for me by somebody who could only be a landlady. She led me to a room on the first floor, invited me to seat myself, and explained that although Mr. Ouspensky was in the house he was busy at the moment in the basement, developing photographs. She promised to let him know that I had arrived. I was grateful for the opportunity given me to examine the rooms of my teacher, for a man's rooms are usually more revealing of his character than are the clothes he wears. What an incongruous abode this was for a purveyor of Eastern knowledge of an esoteric nature. There was so much in the road and in the house that was highly respectable, suburban, self-satisfied and narrow in its outlook. Gwendyr Road brought me back to the Victorian Age in which I had been born, and it amused me that in this Victorian setting I should shortly be discussing ideas of a religious nature, but ideas which would have deeply shocked my pious old Presbyterian grandmama. It would be interesting, whilst waiting for Ouspensky to look at his living apartment so I now took careful stock of it. There was a divan-bed, a bookcase, two chairs near to the gas-fire, and a large mahogany table on which rested a typewriter, writing materials, a camera, a galvanometer and a fragment from some scientific apparatus of an unfamiliar nature. On the mantelpiece lay a half-finished tin of sardines, the remains of a loaf, a plate, knife and fork, and a few morsels of cheese. Evidently, Ouspensky had recently eaten a meal, whilst standing there by the mantelpiece. He had probably done this because the table was so cluttered up with other things that there was no room on it for anything else. The room and its furniture belonged to the Victorian Age but Ouspensky had a nice disregard for such Victorian conventions as tidiness. I intended next to examine the pictures and the titles of the books, but at that very moment the door opened and Ouspensky quietly entered. He apologized for keeping me waiting and he explained that he had been developing and fixing some plates, and that he was unable to leave them sooner. We sat down on the two chairs by the gas-fire and then Ouspensky looked at me and uttered his usual introductory "Well".

I began by saying that I was greatly interested in his lectures

and that I had been particularly impressed by what he had said about man's having a number of different controlling 'centres' or 'minds'. I explained that I have never been satisfied with Freud's views of psychology, and that I very much preferred the system of psychology that he was putting forward at Warwick Gardens. Ouspensky interrupted me. "So far, we have been dealing at Warwick Gardens only with *mechanics* and not with *psychology*. Psychology is applicable only to a *man*, and not to a *man-machine*. I have spent the time discussing mechanical man's different 'centres' and how they function. As I have said, the study of psychology applies to *men* only, and up till now we have been discussing, not *men*, but *men-machines*. Psychology will start very shortly, and then I shall talk more about the different paths to self-development."

I made no comment on this because I did not want to discuss again the idea that ordinary men were only machines. "May I put to you a question?" I asked him.

"Certainly."

"Why are you giving these lectures, Mr. Ouspensky? What are your motives? Is it philanthropy?"

He laughed and shook his head.

"Is it because that, by teaching others, one clarifies one's own ideas? As you probably know, I am on the teaching staff of Bart's Hospital, and I find that lecturing to students has this effect on my own thinking."

"Perhaps partly for that reason" he replied, and then relapsed into silence.

"You have a great many people in your audience belonging to different professions. Do you sometimes get useful information from their specialized knowledge, and obtain help in that way?"

"Maybe," he answered, and then, after a long pause, he continued: "I have other reasons besides these, which you may learn about later. One has different obligations in life, and if one has received help in the past from a higher source, then one must pass on one's knowledge to others. It is a general principle."

"What is the aim of this particular system of thought?" I asked.

"The system itself has no aim. Those who use this system may have an aim, and it will be useful to you if you will try to define your own aim—not necessarily to me, but to yourself. To have a clear aim in life is of very great importance. Few people know what they want, and this is the real meaning of many of the old fairy stories. For example, there is the well-known story about a fairy, or a *genie*, who suddenly appears, and who promises to grant three wishes to the chief character in the story. The tale then goes on to narrate how the chooser does not know what to choose. More often than not he selects so badly that he has to make use of the third wish to get rid of what he has chosen previously. You remember the case of Midas, who was in danger of starving to death because he had asked that everything that he touched should be changed into gold."

Ouspensky then inquired how I had heard about the meetings in Warwick Gardens, and I told him that Maurice Nicoll and I were great friends and that it was through him that I had come.

"That is very interesting that you and he are great friends," Ouspensky remarked. "You see, you two belong to very different types, and you remind me strongly of two people of different types who came to the Moscow group. They also were great friends. One of that couple belonged to the type to which you belong, but you are a more successful member of your type than he was."

It was gratifying to know that one was a successful representative of a type but, at that particular moment, I should have much preferred to have been accepted by Ouspensky as an individual, and not as a representative of a type. I deliberately steered the conversation, therefore, in a different direction and inquired about Ouspensky's life in Russia, and about what he thought of the present situation there. He told me that he had formerly been a journalist on the staff of a certain Russian paper, but that he had left Russia because life there was now impossible for anyone who was not a Bolshevik.

Soon afterwards the conversation showed signs of coming to an end. Having contributed a few rather dreary remarks I rose to my feet and said goodbye. Ouspensky had been as impersonal as I

had been in our rather desultory talk together and although he had made some interesting general statements I found myself no closer to him than I had been in Warwick Gardens. I felt that the interview had been a failure. Ouspensky had excellent manners and he accompanied me to the door, and invited me to come back to see him again, whenever I wanted to do so. Soon after I had left him I thought of the many questions I should have liked to have put to him.

At the next Warwick Gardens meeting Ouspensky returned to the subject of different levels of consciousness and of efforts to 'self-remember'. He recommended that we should sit down by ourselves in a room in which we were not likely to be disturbed, that we should put a watch down on the table beside us, should look at it, and should discover for how long we were able to retain the idea and the feeling that we were *there*, seated at a table, looking at a watch, and trying to 'remember ourselves'. He said we should find that this was a far more difficult thing to do than it had at first sight appeared to be. He ended by asking us to report how we had got on with 'self-remembering' and what we had found, at the next meeting.

The reports given by the group at the next meeting about efforts to self-remember were unanimously to the effect that it was a very difficult thing to do. We had found that our attention continually strayed. Unwanted thoughts were always breaking into the silent circle of our self-awareness and sweeping us out of it, so that we immediately lost all sense of our existence. We might 'come-to' again some five or ten minutes later, to discover that we had been lost all that time in the wild worlds of our imaginations. At this particular Warwick Gardens Meeting a great many questions were asked by people on the subject of 'self-remembering' and much was said about its difficulties. A rather scholarly-looking man in the front row, wearing strong glasses, began to make the following objection to the practice of self-remembering: "But, surely if we are going to spend half of our day thinking about ourselves and about what we are doing at that particular moment, surely that will prevent . . . "

Ouspensky interrupted him. "Self-remembering is not *thinking*

about ourselves or about anything else," he said, "It is *consciousness*, or *awareness* of ourselves and of all that is happening, both within and without ourselves. 'Thinking' is one thing and 'consciousness' is an entirely different thing. We can *think* about the subject of 'consciousness' and in doing this we lose all awareness of what we are trying to do—to remember ourselves. There can be thinking without any awareness of thinking, and, still more important, there can be consciousness devoid of any thought. The latter is what happens in *higher* states of consciousness. You will find, if you persevere in your efforts of self-remembering, that the associative thinking, which goes on all the time by itself, is the chief obstacle to our attainment of any higher level of consciousness. Try to understand what I am saying, and put the matter to a practical test. Discover for *yourselves* the difference between 'self-awareness' and 'thinking about oneself'. Don't accept blindly my statement that man is living in a state of sleep, but put it to a personal test. At this moment you are aware of your being in this room and listening to me, because your attention has been specially called to these facts, but soon after you have left this room you will return to your previous state of day-dreaming. Compare your customary state of waking-sleep with the state you are in when you are struggling to remember yourselves."

As I drove back to Harley Street that evening I turned over, in my mind, all that Ouspensky had said about sleeping mankind. If it were really true that not only myself, but that everybody else was asleep, what a revolutionary change we should have to make in our view of human life on this planet. A sleeping world! A world of drowsy people drifting about in the streets, closeted in Government offices, conducting affairs of State, hurrying into the lobby of the Houses of Parliament to record their votes, dispensing justice from the Bench; people doing a thousand different things and doing them all in a state which approximated to a state of sleep! Yes, Ouspensky had meant us to take his words on this subject, literally. He had pictured a world of somnambulists, a world of men walking about automatically, without their being aware of what they were doing, a world of people behaving entirely mechanically and according to conditioned habits. He had

said that man possessed five centres or minds which controlled the functions of thinking, feeling, moving, sex and the work of co-ordinating the various physiological activities of his body. Ouspensky had told us that our three functions of moving, thinking and feeling were all carried out in a state approximating to sleep. Fortunately for us these centres or minds did their work sufficiently well on a low level of consciousness for most practical purposes. For example, my 'moving centre' was now driving me and my car home moderately well, even though my feelings and my thoughts were being directed on to other things. In all probability my moving centre did its work better in this semi-conscious state than did the centres controlling my thoughts and my feelings, because it was thoroughly accustomed to doing its work automatically and with little or no awareness of the movements it was making. Yes, Ouspensky had really meant all that he had said about man being asleep. We were living in a 'Sleep-walker's' world! How extraordinary it was to 'come to' and find oneself in a world inhabited by people who moved about in a twilight of consciousness, imagining all the time that they were fully awake. No situation was more fraught with danger than this, for it would undoubtedly lead to much misunderstanding amongst men, and if misunderstanding were evidence of our being asleep, then, without any doubt, the truth of Ouspensky's theory had been proved up to the hilt. Very few people understood one another in this world of ours. It was a world teeming with manifest absurdities and with gross misunderstandings, a world in which nations offered each other friendship and, at the same time, prepared for war. It was a world in which politicians said one thing and did another thing, a world in which we were all walking in circles. Yes, there was plenty of evidence of our living on a very low level of consciousness, and of our having very little real understanding of one another. It was not surprising that governments made such a mess of world affairs.

Could anything be done to remedy it? I very much doubted this, but at any rate it was worth trying to put into practice the methods with Ouspensky had advocated that we should adopt. He had recommended that we should avoid, as much as was

possible, our becoming imprisoned in our 'identifications', and that we should try to awake occasionally from our dreams by means of efforts to self-remember. He had also urged us to make special efforts to be 'present' much more often than we were 'present' throughout the day so that we should become aware of what we were doing at those moments. Ouspensky had repeatedly emphasized the fact that if we were to make any progress at all it would be progress achieved as the result of working simultaneously along two different lines, which he had called the line of 'knowledge' and the line of 'being'. Well, I had acquired a considerable amount of 'knowledge' by attending the Warwick Gardens meetings, but had I paid sufficient attention to work along the line of 'being?' I very much doubted this. But after all I had only just started to make these special efforts. I resembled one of Pavlov's dogs that had been conditioned to behave in a certain way and that would be unable to behave in any other manner until it had been subjected to a very long process of *reconditioning*. The reconditioning process would take me many years, for the part of me which would be responsible for bringing it about was very weak. It consisted only of the few 'I's' within me that had a definite aim and were willing to work for it. This being so the reconditioning process was bound to take a very long time. It is taking even longer than I anticipated in those far-off days!

V

IDENTIFICATION

I WAS GLAD when Ouspensky continued to talk about different levels of consciousness at the next meeting. I was glad because consciousness seemed to me to be an all-important subject, a key-subject which would be likely to be of greater interest to me than anything else discussed at Warwick Gardens. It was a subject which could be investigated by careful self-observation; one could try to find out the degree of self-consciousness one possessed at different moments in the day. Was one often aware of one's existence and of what was happening, both within and without, or was one oblivious of all of these things, as Ouspensky had declared one to be? A very small amount of self-observation would decide the matter for all time, and I soon settled the matter for myself. I discovered that I spent almost the whole of my day in a state of waking-sleep. And looking carefully at other people and observing their behaviour during my own moments of self-awareness, I came to the conclusion that what applied to *me*, applied to everybody else. We were in a state of 'waking-sleep' almost the whole of the day.

Ouspensky began his next talk about different states of consciousness by stating that Christianity and Buddhism both placed great emphasis on the subject of different levels of consciousness. Jesus often linked together 'watchfulness' and 'prayer' when he was talking to his disciples. I confirmed this by looking at the Bible but after I had searched the New Testament carefully I

could find nothing there to show that Jesus had given his disciples precise instructions, as to how they could awake out of their sleep, and maintain, for a time, a state of 'watchfulness'. Buddha was far more explicit on this subject, for in my opinion, 'mindfulness' and 'self-remembering' were synonymous terms, and the word mindfulness was often on the Buddhist's lips.

Ouspensky next went on to discuss the two higher levels of consciousness which he had mentioned at a previous meeting but had not, as yet, described. He called these two higher levels of consciousness the state of true *Self-consciousness*, and the state of *Objective consciousness*. He then went on to say that it was possible for a man to achieve these two higher states, but only after a prolonged and a very hard struggle with sleep. In the state of true Self-consciousness the higher centre of the mind which he had called the higher emotional centre came into action. On the still higher level of Objective consciousness, the higher intellectual centre also became active. He said that another way of describing these two higher states of consciousness would be to define them in terms of their relationship to the cognition of truth. On our customary level of consciousness, that is to say the level of waking-sleep, we apprehended only *relative* truths about everything, because on that level we were only 'relatively conscious'. On the third level of consciousness, that is to say on the level of *real* Self-consciousness, we were able to know the *whole* of the truth about *ourselves*. But it was only a man in possession of the fourth and highest possible level of consciousness, the level of Objective consciousness, who was able to know the *full* truth about *everything*. In other words, on this highest level of all the world could be studied as it really *was*, and not as man imagined it to be.

A woman now asked a question which clearly showed that she did not even understand what Ouspensky had meant by the term *Self-consciousness*. She appeared to be using the term *Self*-consciousness as a synonym for shyness, that is to say for *identification* with one's own personality, and with what people were thinking about us. Ouspensky promptly interrupted her, and told her that what she was trying to describe was not a state of Self-consciousness but was a state of identification, and therefore of

deeper sleep. He said that in that identified state a person could know nothing at all about anything. Her remarks had no connection with what he was now talking about.

Another person asked Ouspensky how a man could manage to awake out of his sleep.

"Ah, that is a highly important question," replied Ouspensky. "The first step in the process of awakening out of sleep is that a man should realize fully that he *is* actually asleep, and that he is spending almost the whole of his life in that state. Unless he is fully convinced of the truth of this—and convinced, not by a teacher but by his own observations on himself—he will do nothing at all about it. Why should he? Consequently it is of the utmost importance that everybody should make observations on themselves, and that they should become accustomed to comparing one level of consciousness in themselves with another level of consciousness in themselves." Ouspensky said that the change from waking-sleep to true Self-consciousness was sometimes so marked, and so abrupt, that it resembled coming out of an anaesthetic and suddenly discovering oneself sitting in a dentist's chair, after having been absent somewhere, for what seemed a long time. One or two personal experiences of this kind would convince us that we ascribed to ourselves a state of self-awareness which we very seldom reached.

"When we *are* firmly convinced that we spend most of our time asleep, what comes next?" asked someone.

"The next step will be to struggle with the things which keep us asleep, for as I have already told you, our daytime sleeping has the character of a hypnotic sleep, or sleep which has been imposed on us. This being so we have to struggle with the things which send us to sleep, such things as our numerous identifications, our imaginations, and that endless babel of chattering which goes on within us all the time. It is these things which constitute the most serious obstacles to our awakening."

"That sounds all very difficult," interposed someone.

"Of course it is very difficult," replied Ouspensky. "We all know how difficult it is to control our attention and to 'self-remember', and a man is not going to wake-up just because he

thinks it desirable to do so. Such a man has a hard struggle before him. It would even be true to say that a single individual would find it almost impossible to wake up by himself. It is necessary for him to get help from other people. Let us suppose, for example, that twenty people come to a decision to work together in order to wake up. They agree that whoever awakes for a short time during the day, should immediately awaken all the others. There exists, of course the possibility that they will *all* go to sleep together, and dream that they are engaged in waking up. In order to prevent this happening they will have to hire a man, who does not fall asleep as readily, or as often, as they do, to keep an eye on them, and to shake them from time to time. That is possible." Ouspensky surveyed the group and smiled.

He then described how man's habit of falling asleep so readily had been acquired. He said that every baby was born *potentially* capable of attaining Self-consciousness, and of being aware of himself and of what he was doing. But unfortunately he had been born amongst sleeping people and he went deeply to sleep amongst them just at the time when he should be becoming *more* aware of himself. He was unable to acquire Self-consciousness for several reasons but chiefly because there were too many things which were exercising a soporific effect on him. One of the chief obstacles to a young person's making any progress was the bad example set him by the sleeping adults with whom he was associating. A still more formidable obstacle was the character of his education, for every attempt of a child to awaken a little from sleep was frowned upon by the grown-ups responsible for him. His situation, from the very start, was a hopeless one, and by the time that he had grown up he was as deeply asleep as were his fellow men. It was not surprising therefore that it would be very difficult for him to do anything about his state, if, many years later, he were to meet a teacher, and were to realize that he was actually asleep and wanted to awaken himself.

The talk then drifted into a discussion on the main obstacles to man's awakening, and Ouspensky repeated, what he had said before, that the most important of these obstacles was man's tendency to *identify* himself with everything. This being so, we

had to avoid all forms of identification, and our struggle against identifications was rendered still more difficult by the fact that many of us regarded signs of our becoming identified with favour. We attached such names as 'zeal', enthusiasm' and 'inspiration' to our various 'identifications'. We even went so far as to declare that no satisfactory work could be done in the absence of some form of identification. This was, of course, a grotesque illusion, for in a state of identification a thinking man entirely disappeared, and was replaced by something which had very little semblance to a human being. In short we ceased to be 'man' and became 'things'.

Ouspensky then gave us some excellent examples of the absurdities which can occur when a human being has disappeared into some identification and has ceased to *be*. He said: "In the East, where people smoke opium and take such drugs as 'hashish', it often happens that a man becomes so identified with his pipe that he begins to consider that he is a pipe himself. This is not a joke but an actual fact. He actually becomes a pipe. This is brought about by identification and for identifying to happen *hashish* and *opium* are entirely unnecessary. We can disappear into the things with which we have become identified without any help from drugs. Look at the people gobbling their food in restaurants and see how they disappear into it, and by 'it' I mean their food. Or watch those who are engaged in a heated argument, and note how they are entrapped by their own words, particularly when they are arguing about some subject concerning which they know nothing at all. All of these identified people cease to be human and become food, desire, convictions or words. Of *themselves* and of their existence nothing remains at all. For the time being they have entirely disappeared."

Ouspensky then went on to say that *inner considering* was another rather subtle form of 'identification with oneself'. The person who became a prey to 'inner considering' was entirely preoccupied with what other people were thinking about him. "He was wondering whether they were criticizing him and were underestimating his worth." Occupied with such thoughts as these, the person in question was always 'on guard' and this being so he was

usually very easily irritated. Nor was it only with regard to other individuals and with their private opinions of him and his worth, that a person might be concerned. He might be suspicious also that certain groups of people, or even whole sections of society might be criticizing his actions. Ouspensky said that when 'inner considering' took this more generalized form, its victim usually took refuge behind façades of impressive words, such as the grand words 'Justice' and 'Liberty'. To quote Ouspensky: "When a man has become indignant with some supposed 'injustice', then for him to stop 'inner-considering' would mean reconciling himself to an 'injustice'. In the eyes of such a man to give up his indignation and his 'inner considering' would not be going against *mechanism*. It would entail an abandonment of all his moral principles! People can even become indignant and identified with something as impersonal as the weather. They are capable of looking up at the sky and of feeling they are being subjected to indignities and humiliations which no self-respecting person ought to tolerate."

I had a long talk with Maurice Nicoll afterwards on the subject of identification. He told me that Gurdjieff had once said that the only hope for the world was that man should eventually reach a higher level of being, in other words that he should wake more out of his sleep. Only if he did this would he obtain any understanding of his true situation, and take any steps to remedy it. Maurice emphasized again what Ouspensky had proclaimed at a previous meeting, namely, that for any progress to be made, man must advance simultaneously along the two lines of 'knowledge' and 'being'. At present his knowledge was advancing much more rapidly than his being. This meant that he had very little real understanding of what he knew.

At the following meeting, Ouspensky returned to the all-important subject of identification. The process which Gurdjieff called identification was identical with the psychological state known to the Buddhists as attachment. We 'flowed', as it were, into whatever had happened to capture our attention, so that we were oblivious of everything else. In these moments of attachment or identification, our consciousness sank to a very low level

and unfortunately we spent most of the day passing from one form of identification to another form of it. What was particularly surprising was that we identified ourselves, not only with our pleasures, our enjoyments and our successes, but also with our miseries and our misfortunes. Indeed, Gurdjieff had once remarked, to his Moscow group, that the last thing that a man was willing to give up was his identification with his own *suffering*! A man managed to extract a great deal of pleasure from the thought that he was a 'long suffering martyr', or a 'much misunderstood man', or a 'deeply injured individual'. If anything should be obvious to an observer determined to awaken more often from his waking-sleep, it should be the absurdity of this identification of a man with his own sufferings. Identifications of this kind played havoc with our lives. Another trouble was that we failed to detect the negative character of these kinds of emotion because we hid their true nature from ourselves behind misleading names such as the name 'righteous anger'. So also did we manage to extract additional enjoyment from them by contriving to find other people on whom we could place the blame for our identifications. It was a highly significant fact that writers and journalists regarded scenes of violence, despair, suffering and sorrow as excellent themes for plays, cinema films, books and front-page articles. It was the horror-film which always filled the cinema regardless of the fact that by identifying ourselves with the negative emotions which the film portrayed, we lost a great deal of valuable nervous energy. An audience usually came out of the cinema drained of a great deal of energy after it had watched a horror-film.

All teachers have favourite themes to which they enjoy returning and, if there were any statement which Ouspensky enjoyed making, it was the statement that negative emotions were entirely *unnecessary* to us. To support this statement he said that nature had made no real provision for the recording of negative emotions. Whilst our intellectual and moving centres possessed negative sides to them, our emotional centre was without one, so that we were compelled to use for the purpose of recording them, the negative parts of the instinctive centre.

Ouspensky's statement about negative emotions evoked a

question about fear. Somebody asked him whether fear ought to be included amongst our unnecessary negative emotions. Ouspensky replied that the answer depended on the variety of fear to which the questioner was referring. This would make all the difference, for there were many highly useful forms of fear, registered by the body in moments of grave physical danger. For example, there was the fear that a man experienced when he found himself slipping slowly towards the edge of a cliff. There was also the sudden realization, whilst crossing a road, that a car was approaching very rapidly. The fear of being knocked down might, and generally did, have excellent results for us. It prompted quick evasive action, and it prompted it much more rapidly than thought alone would have done. These were useful forms of fear which were produced by the presence of genuine forms of danger. But many people spent their lives engulfed in a host of entirely imaginary fears, which served no purpose at all. They were scared of dangers which had never happened to them in the past, and which were extremely unlikely to happen to them in the future. These imagination-inspired fears had to be included amongst the serious obstacles to our awakening out of our sleep and, having seen them, we must do our best to get rid of them. With this statement on the subject of fear the meeting closed.

VI

THE COSMOS AND COSMIC LAWS

DURING THE FIRST EIGHT MEETINGS at Warwick Gardens Ouspensky dealt mainly with the psychological ideas of Gurdjieff's System, ideas which were more important to us than those of a philosophical nature. He had repeatedly laid emphasis on this fact, and had told us that we must not accept any psychological statements blindly, but must put everything to a practical test. Was it, or was it not confirmed by our own experience? It would be a good thing, he said, for us to observe ourselves and our various activities during the week, and to bring any questions about what we had seen to the next meeting. But after two months of practical work of this kind Ouspensky suddenly began to discuss the more philosophical aspects of the system, starting with an account of the chief laws which controlled the universe in which we lived. At the previous meeting somebody had asked him why it was so difficult for us to effect any real changes in ourselves, and he had replied: "It is against nature for anyone to make such changes, and it is particularly difficult for people to change when they live, as we do, on a very remote planet. You see, the earth is a planet which is a long way from the Absolute." He then announced that the time had now come when it would be necessary for us to study man's relationship to the universe.

On the following Thursday, Ouspensky fulfilled this promise. "We shall start," he began, "by discussing the two great Cosmic Laws controlling everything, the Law of Three and the Law of

Seven. The first of these great laws can be formulated quite simply as follows: "All phenomena, on every scale from the sub-atomic scale to the vast scale of the cosmos, are the result of the meeting, and of the inter-action of three principles or forces. Scientists recognize the existence only of *two* of the forces which are responsible for phenomena. For example, physicists recognize the existence of the two principles of negative and positive electricity in all phenomena of an electrical nature. So also do biologists describe male and female germinal cells. But, so far, scientists have not realized the need for the presence of a third force if phenomena are to occur. Or, it would be more correct to say that they recognize the need for a third principle only in a few chemical phenomena of a 'catalytic' nature. It has been realized for example that the presence of platinum has an accelerating action on the combining of two atoms of hydrogen with one atom of oxygen to form water. But what scientists take to be only an exceptional phenomenon in chemistry constitutes a Universal Law. This Law can be formulated very simply. It can be said that when a third of neutralizing force is absent, nothing happens. We can also find good examples of the action of the Law of Three *within* ourselves, as well as in all external phenomena. But we shall now pass on to a consideration of the other great Cosmic Law, the Law of Seven.

"This Law is known also as the law of the octave. We shall begin with the idea that the universe is a vast network of vibrations, the vibrations occurring in many different densities of matter, from the finest to the coarsest. These cosmic vibrations come from innumerable sources and they proceed in every direction, crossing one another, colliding with one another, strengthening one another, and weakening and occasionally arresting one another. When the original force with which the vibrations started has been exhausted, then those particular vibrations come to an end. The system of knowledge we are now studying recognizes a principle which is called the principle of *discontinuity of vibrations*. By this is meant that the force of the original impulse does not gain or diminish in strength regularly. It gains or it loses its force irregularly and according to the law of the octave. There

are two points in the octave at which the vibrations either start to slow down more rapidly, in the case of a *descending* octave, or to increase more rapidly, in the case of an *ascending* octave. In order to determine the position of the checks in the ascending octave and in the descending octave we have to divide the line of development of the radiations into periods in which the radiations either halve or else double their frequency. Having done this, we subdivide these periods into eight, thus converting them into a series of octaves. The seven-tone scale which has been employed for a long time in music is representative of the working of the great Cosmic Law of Seven. The law of octaves was discovered, in the distant past, in some esoteric school, and it was applied at first only to the study of music. If we now make use of the terms employed in describing a tonic sol-fah octave we can say that the retardations and the accelerations in the rate of the vibrations occur at two points in the musical octave, namely, between the notes *me* and *fah* and between the final note *te* and the start of the new *doh* of a higher octave."

Ouspensky then said that later we should find many examples of the working of the Law of Seven, both in man himself, and in the universe in which he lived. It was important that we should study the two phenomena of 'man' and the 'universe' together, for they were very closely related to one another. All ancient systems of knowledge recognized this fact, and for this reason man was described as being a *microcosm* within a *macrocosm*. In other words, man was a small-scale model of the vast universe in which he lived. And when we came to think more deeply about man and the universe we should find many things to confirm this statement. It was quite impossible to accept the idea that a truth-seeking man could have been the product of the sort of meaningless universe which the scientists had postulated. Such an idea would be absurd.

Ouspensky then declared that another radical change had to be made in our mode of thinking about the universe. We had made the mistake of regarding the great cosmos in which we were living as being a wilderness of almost empty space in which a comparatively few solid and semi-solid things were moving about. Bergson was right in stating that we had reached this conclusion because it

was the function of our intellects to make cuts across the continuous flow of events which constituted the universe. The intellect did this in order to divide the great whole into fragments with which our reasons were capable of dealing. But actually the universe was not what we pictured it to be. It was a vast network of vibrations passing in every direction, a network in which condensations of energy into matter had occurred in certain places. Yet another truth about the universe had to be recognized. It was that no energy in the universe was ever entirely lost although it might take another form. For example, the earth benefited greatly from the energy reaching it from the sun and one of the results of the sun's energy was the growth on the earth of organic life. The latter could be regarded as being a more or less continuous film of living plants and animals which covered the whole surface of this planet. And the earth in turn received energy from the chemical changes occurring in the film of organic life. Ouspensky ended by saying that *everything* in the universe, could be regarded as being alive, even such great organisms as the earth and the sun. So also was everything in the universe subject to the great Cosmic Laws of Three and Seven. Finally everything in the universe either evolved or degenerated. Above all, we had to recognize the fact that everything in the universe was much more closely related to everything else than we had previously imagined it to be. Having given us a great deal to think about, Ouspensky sat down.

"What about man?" asked someone. "What is man's function in the vast network of closely inter-related energies that you have described?" Ouspensky rose abruptly from his chair, stalked over to the blackboard, and drew on it a diagram which he called the 'ray of creation'. He said that this diagram represented the development of the different orders of 'worlds' in the cosmos, a development which took place in accordance with the working of the two great Cosmic Laws, the Law of Three and Seven. "Everything originates from the Absolute," he said, and he drew a large circle at the top of the blackboard to represent the Absolute. He then placed below the Absolute a descending sequence of circles representing the different 'worlds' in the

ray of creation. After the Absolute came 'all possible worlds'; then the various 'stellar galaxies'; then our own particular galaxy, the 'Milky Way'; next 'the sun'; the 'planetary world' and finally, at the end of the ray, the earth and its attendant satellite, the 'moon'. In this descending octave the first interval occurred between the Absolute and the 'all possible worlds' and the second interval between the 'planetary world' and the 'earth'. Ouspensky then reminded us of the fact that everything in the universe emanated from the Absolute and that the three creative forces of the Absolute possessed unique qualities. Unlike the three forces in other worlds the three forces of the Absolute possessed full consciousness, will and understanding. This allowed of their reuniting at a pre-determined point, thus giving rise to the first series of worlds in the ray of creation, which Ouspensky had called 'all possible worlds'. The process of creation was repeated on the lower level of 'all possible worlds', but because the three forces responsible for the creation of the later series of worlds, were without the unique qualities of the three forces in the Absolute, their meeting point was, to some extent, the product of accident. All this meant that whilst the will of the Absolute creates and controls the first series of worlds, it does not entirely govern the events occurring in the lower part of the ray of creation. In other words the further the ray of creation travels away from the Absolute, the more accidental and the more mechanical do the events in that part of the ray become.

Ouspensky then pointed out to us that the diagram which he had just drawn on the blackboard ran counter to current scientific ideas about the universe. In the first place, it treated the whole universe as a living universe which possessed the capacity to grow, whereas science regarded the universe as a slowly dying universe. It was dying because it was subject to the inexorable second law of thermo-dynamics, the law of increasing entropy. According to scientists the moon was a dead world but according to Gurdjieff's cosmology, the moon was in the process of slowly becoming, not colder, but warmer. It was becoming slowly warmer because, all the time, it was receiving energies coming from the higher levels of the ray of creation.

Having drawn a thin line, in a red-coloured chalk around the earth to represent organic life on the earth, Ouspensky returned to his seat. He then said "I have drawn this diagram and I have said all that I have said about it in order to provide a satisfactory answer to a question which was put to me a few meetings ago, the question: 'What is man's function in the universe?' I begin my answer by saying that man is a part of organic life, that is to say of the living and highly sensitive film which covers the surface of the earth. It is a film which possesses the capacity to absorb and also to give off later the energies which it has received from the higher levels of the ray of creation. You will notice also that organic life is situated within the lower of the two intervals to be found in the great Cosmic Octave of Creation. Organic life receives and transmits onwards energies which it has received from the higher levels of the ray of creation. It has, of course, other functions as well as this one, but the most important of its functions is to transmit onwards to the earth energies coming from above. Ouspensky said that Gurdjieff had gone so far as to say that different forms of life transmitted onwards to the earth different forms of energies, so that a more highly developed man might transmit a higher form of radiation to the earth than an ordinary man was capable of doing. Ouspensky then added that we were entitled to interpret this statement as we liked, but it was linked up with yet another idea in the system, namely, the idea that it was the duty of the more highly evolved men to pass on the knowledge they had acquired to others, because the earth was in need of the energies coming from higher forms of life, as well as of those transmitted by such lowly forms of life as worms and bacteria.

Many questions were now asked about man's function in the universe, and then quite suddenly the discussion moved in an entirely different direction. Someone asked whether it was true that Gurdjieff's philosophy was an entirely materialistic one? The questioner said that whilst Ouspensky had been describing the action of organic life in transmitting energies onwards to the earth, he had spoken only about *matter* and *energy*, and had never once uttered the words 'mind' and 'spirit'. Did Gurdjieff not

recognize the existence of such higher entities as mind and spirit, and if he did recognize them, under what headings should they be placed?

Ouspensky replied that for at least a thousand years philosophers had been discussing the difficult problem of the relationship existing between man's body and his mind. Their problem was to explain how two such entirely different entities as a mind and a body could meet, and could interact on one another. Nobody had been able to give a satisfactory explanation of how this happened, and the only way out of the difficulty was to substitute a *monist* for a *dualist* philosophy, and this was what the system had done. It had described everything in terms of the single fundamental concept of *matter* or *energy*, and it had solved the problem which had for so long baffled the philosophers by attributing to matter, and to energy, *psychic* as well as physical properties. The finer the matter the higher were its psychic qualities. The materialism of the system was therefore an entirely different materialism from scientific materialism. Instead of degrading mind to the level of matter, it had raised matter to the level of mind.

I gave the materialism of the system a great deal of thought. At first I found difficulty in accepting a philosophy which regarded thoughts, emotions and knowledge as being fine varieties of matter. I had less difficulty in accepting the view that everything in the universe was alive, because this was in harmony with the views of my favourite modern philosopher, A. N. Whitehead. That the film of organic life covering the surface of the earth was a transmitter and a transmitter of energies gave me no difficulty at all, for I had recently read a book by a scientist named Vernadsky who held similar views to those which had been expressed by Ouspensky. Vernadsky called the film of organic life covering the earth the 'biosphere' and he stated that the latter was an exceedingly active chemical agent. He wrote that if the chemical activity of the biosphere were to stop a great many chemical processes in the earth's crust would be arrested. The minerals in the earth's crust, the free alum, and the hydrates of iron would no longer be formed there, so that a state of chemical equilibrium would occur. It would be a state of almost complete stagnation, broken only

occasionally by some mild volcanic activity, or by some upward thrust of imprisoned gases in the earth's crust. The amount of free oxygen in the atmosphere would be so much reduced that many of the oxidation processes now taking place on the earth's surface would be diminished or even arrested.

What made the system's account of man and of the universe more easy for me to accept, in the end, was the fact that it was very much in line with Whitehead's philosophy which regarded everything in the universe as being 'alive' and as 'taking account' of everything else. That the universe was alive and that it was intelligent seemed to me much more likely than the scientists' notion that it was devoid both of meaning and of intelligence. It was also probable that everything in the universe was much more closely connected with everything else, than people, brought up in a scientific age, believed them to be. Marcus Aurelius emphasized this inter-connectedness centuries ago, and he went so far as to advise his readers to brood upon this thought. He wrote:

Frequently consider the connection of all things in the Universe, and men's relationship to one another. For, in a manner, *all* things are implicated with one another; for one thing comes in order after another, and thus by virtue of the active movement and mutual conspiration and unity of substance.

Yes, the more thought I gave to the problem of the universe, the more convinced I became that it constituted a single living organism. Maeterlinck also subscribed to this view of the universe. He wrote:

It seems more certain that, as the cells of an immense organism, we are connected with everything that exists by an intricate network of vibrations, waves and influences of nameless, numberless and uninterrupted fluids. The fact that these pass unperceived by us does not mean that they remain inactive.

The fields of vibrations which surround material objects are often as important as are the objects themselves, but we are inclined to forget this fact. The universe constitutes a whole, and, according to Gurdjieff's system, it constitutes a living and

intelligent whole, which is in the process of either evolving or degenerating.

At the next meeting, Ouspensky abandoned the subject of the cosmos entirely, and he devoted all his attention to a consideration of different levels of man. He reminded us of a statement which he had previously made to the effect that everything in the cosmos, from the great stellar galaxies down to mankind, either evolved or else degenerated. Another principle recognized by the system was that *nothing* ever evolved entirely mechanically, but that things could degenerate mechanically. Ouspensky then described the seven categories of men. Having laid down these general principles, Ouspensky said that the first three varieties of men, namely, man one, two and three, were all on the same level of being, differing only from one another with regard to the centre or mind which played the leading part in that man's life. A number one man was an ordinary mechanical man whose life was ordered chiefly by his moving centre. A number two man was a man who was controlled chiefly by his emotional centre, and a number three man was a man in whom the intellect played the leading role.

According to Ouspensky all men were born men number one, two and three. A number four man never occurred automatically, but was always the product of some kind of 'school work'. Such a man was following one of the four paths which led to inner development and, as a result of his struggles, he stood on a slightly higher level than did man one, two and three. What chiefly distinguished man number four from men one, two and three was that the former was in process of developing within himself, a permanent 'centre of gravity'... By this term, 'centre of gravity', Ouspensky meant that there existed in man number four, a reference point, to which he referred all his questions. It was also a standard by which he judged the value of everything. Actually a man number four weighed everything in terms of the ideas and the values which were guiding him in his struggles to attain a higher level of being. A number five man was a man who had actually attained unity. Above number five man there stood still higher categories of men, namely man number six and man

number seven. Ouspensky told us that, for the time being, he did not propose to discuss the characteristics of such high categories of men as these. All that he would say about them at present was that they possessed 'will' and in consequence of this they were capable of 'doing' what had to be done.

At the next meeting, Ouspensky discussed the different higher categories of men in terms of consciousness. He said that man number five had attained a permanent 'I' and had certain qualities in addition to his possession of self-consciousness and unity. Man number five was a man whose higher emotional centre was capable of functioning. In man number six, higher intellectual centre was capable of working, as well as the higher emotional centre. Ouspensky said that it was entirely beyond our understanding to discuss at present, a man who lived on so high a level as that on which man number seven lived. All that Gurdjieff had really said about man number seven was that he was a man who could be regarded as being 'immortal within the limits of the solar system'.

Ouspensky then returned to a consideration of the different methods by which a man might attain inner development. He said that there were four different roads along which a man might evolve to a higher level of being. There were the three classical roads used for many centuries by the fakir, the monk and the yogi, and there was also the path along which we ourselves were attempting to travel. This last-named path was known as the Fourth Way. Ouspensky then pointed out that an ordinary man had sufficient will to be able to obey the orders of any teacher who stood on a higher level than himself and he said that those who travelled along the paths of the fakir, the monk and the yogi had given up their 'self-will' and had agreed to obey the rulings of their teachers. Those who were travelling along these three classical ways had also retired from the world so that they could devote themselves entirely to their struggles to reach a higher level of being. But the Fourth Way differed from the three great classical ways in that it did not require of a man that he should renounce everything by which he had hitherto lived. Nor did it demand of the man who followed this way that he should submit entirely to

the rulings of his teachers. But we had to recognize the fact that the Fourth Way started on a slightly higher level than the level of ordinary life. This being so, it was necessary that those who were to travel by this path should be specially prepared for their journey. Although many difficulties were encountered on the Fourth Way, it had this great advantage that whereas the monk worked only on his emotional centre, the fakir only on his moving centre and the yogi chiefly on his intellectual centre, the followers of the Fourth Way worked simultaneously on all three centres. This made it possible for the traveller on the Fourth Way to progress a little more quickly than did those who followed the paths of the monk, the fakir and the yogi. At this point[1] Ouspensky ended the meeting.

Ouspensky added at another meeting that a very important principle of the Fourth Way was the principle that the man who was following it had to progress simultaneously along the two different lines of 'knowledge' and 'being'. If a follower's 'knowledge' were allowed to get far ahead of his 'being' the result would be that although he knew *theoretically* what he should do, he would be incapable of doing it. If on the other hand it were his 'being' which had got ahead of his 'knowledge' then he would be in the position of a person who had acquired certain powers by his efforts, but did not know what to do with them.

At the next meeting Ouspensky drew attention again to a subject with which he had dealt when discussing the subject of identification with us. He warned us that confusion was likely to arise when people mistook what was merely *information* for genuine *understanding*. We had always to bear in mind the fact that information was one thing, and that understanding was an entirely different thing. Information was only a knowledge of certain limited facts and this did not necessarily bring with it any real understanding of the subject about which these statements were being made. Nor did an understanding necessarily arrive with a further accession of information. Understanding was always the product of a certain relationship being attained between a man's

[1] Here it is necessary to state that what Ouspensky said of the yogi working chiefly on his mind and his understanding is true only of the Gnana-yogi. The majority of yogis employ all three centres in their efforts to reach a higher level of being.

'knowledge' and his 'being'. *Understanding* could be defined as the resultant between a man's knowledge and his being. Unfortunately for the world the *understanding* of modern man was tending to diminish rather than to increase.

Many years later I was to receive a striking corroboration of Ouspensky's statement that a man's understanding is the resultant of his knowledge and his being. So also was I to discover at a much later date that the ancient *rishis* of India had forestalled by two thousand years the findings of the modern scientists. I quote from a recent number of *Vedanta for East and West*, the official journal of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre in London. In the September number of this journal in 1962, there appeared an article entitled 'Religion as the Fulfilment of Science' written by a Hindu monk of the Ramakrishna order. He begins by saying that the discovery of the Atman (the spiritual entity in man) is the highest goal in all religions, but that before man's mind:

> Can assume the calm serenity of meditation its doubts and its delusions must be dispelled by the help of reason. All the great philosophers of India entered on their philosophical disquisitions with this sole object in view, to find out the *logical* truth of revelation, to help *manana*, and never with mere speculation and intellectual flights. Therein lies the great difference between Indian systems of philosophy and other schools. Here (in India) philosophy is made a handmaid of religion; whereas the other schools, like those in Europe, remain satisfied with mere speculation, and have never touched the practical life of man. And that is why we find in the Vedic religion such a wonderful harmony between faith and reason, between emotion and judgement, between principle and practice.
>
> 'Know Him by faith, devotion, knowledge and the mystic communion'—this is the injunction of the Vedas, given in the *Kaivalya Upanishad*.

The most recent findings of modern science can be summed up as follows: (1) life is a continum; (2) matter is one and indestructible; (3) matter is visible in its effect but invisible in its essence; i.e., knowable and unknowable; and (4) things are not what they seem, i.e., the senses delude us. The details apart, material science has reached the point in its scrutiny where matter eludes its grasp; generally speaking there is not a shadow of doubt today in the mind of the scientists that the

entity which goes by the name of matter, and whose effect and expression are so palpable to the human senses, is in itself perfectly inscrutable. But one thing is certain, that there can be no *creation* in the strict sense of the term. This universe of sense perception is but an unbroken series of phenomena or expression of the primal substance, without any beginning or end. Our observation or experience is but a snatch at a link of that entire endless chain. The phenomenon or the expression may be explainable in relation to its environment, but its central core remains always undeciphered. Not long ago scientists thought themselves perfectly secure within the fortification of their empirical method, and felt sure that they would be able to vanquish all the 'supersitition', as they called it, and ignorance of those who affirmed a spiritual reality by unravelling the heart of the matter. But their earnest search for the Real has all on a sudden produced an Einstein who, with the same weapon of empiricism, has begun to demolish the fort of empirical science. So naturally, those open-minded scientists whose minds are not tramelled by the scientific superstitions, have begun to feel their position shaky so far as the possibility of determining the ultimate truth of matter by the aid of this empirical method is concerned. But the *terra firma* of modern science is in its determination of the interrelations of the different aspects of the phenomenal world, and their practical value in work-a-day life.

VII

ESOTERIC KNOWLEDGE

THE FOLLOWING WEEK, Maurice and I dined together at the Café Royal. It was not the Café Royal as it is today, but the full-blooded Café Royal of Edwardian days. A little of its former splendour had disappeared even then but it had managed to retain its gorgeous crimson plush upholstery and its long and elegant gilt mirrors. Well-known artists and literary figures were to be seen dining there and its foreign waiters and general atmosphere made it easy for an inexperienced youth like myself to believe that he was dining in Paris, particularly after he had had a drink or two. It was concerning the 'drink or two' associated with a Café Royal dinner that Maurice and I now had a slight difference of opinion. We had eaten a very carefully chosen meal and Maurice was in the process of asking the waiter to bring us coffee and two glasses of brandy when I interrupted him.

"I only want coffee," I said firmly.

"K., why don't you drink?' Why are you so ridiculously abstemious?"

"I've never liked drinking," I answered. "I have a feeling that taking alcohol, when one is tired, is an attempt to get something from nothing. Because one has no energy, one has a drink, and this is just like spurring on an exhausted horse instead of dismounting and giving it what it really requires—a feed and a rest. Alcohol lifts one up for the moment and then dumps one down again on a lower level than before."

"That's all nonsense, K.," Maurice replied, "That is not the real reason for your not drinking. It's only an invented reason. The true explanation of your refusing a drink is that you, like myself, were reared in a gloomy Scottish Presbyterian atmosphere and that *you* have never recovered from it. I have, and I insist on your having something with me. If you don't want brandy then order something else."

"I'll have a Crème de Menthe," I answered. "I like its rich green colour."

The waiter and Maurice exchanged sympathetic glances. "What on earth could be done with a fellow like that?" they seemed to be saying. "Then, one double brandy and a Crème de Menthe," said Maurice in a resigned voice to the waiter. "You make a great mistake, K.," he remarked when the waiter had gone. "Either live well like these people do," he waved his hand in the direction of two young men and two girls drinking and making a great deal of noise at a neighbouring table. "Or else retire into a monastery and live the Good Life. Eat, drink and be merry or . . ." (here followed a long pause) "or, if you are prepared to do this, go all out on the Fourth Way."

"Where did Gurdjieff find this thing he calls the Fourth Way?" I inquired.

"I don't know and I don't believe that anybody knows. All that can be said about G.'s teaching is that it was found in the East and that those who prepared it for Western consumption made use of certain scientific terms such as the term 'hydrogen.' Gurdjieff possesses a very good working knowledge of science and when expounding the philosophical side of his Eastern teaching to Westerners, he frequently makes use of scientific terms. By doing this he has made a kind of bridge between Eastern and Western teaching. You've got to remember that during their twelve years of travel, G. and his companions met many different kinds of people—wandering dervishes, yogis and a number of highly gifted and more evolved types of men. They also stayed at a number of different monasteries and were even admitted to certain ancient and rather secret brotherhoods. Afterwards they pooled all the esoteric knowledge they had collected, collated it,

and, in order to render it more comprehensible to us Westerners, they made use of certain scientific terms. But why are you so sceptical, K.?"

"I'm not sceptical."

"Yes, you are. I noticed that your expression entirely changed when I used the words 'esoteric knowledge'. We give ourselves away far more often than we imagine we do, K. Why don't you like the word 'esoteric'? What is wrong with it?"

"Oh, I suppose it is because so many frauds are perpetrated in the name of esoteric and occult knowledge."

"Maybe. But in spite of bogus societies, hidden knowledge exists, that is to say knowledge which is transmitted orally to those who are able to receive it. The history of world culture is much longer than we think it is and, long before any knowledge appeared on vellum scrolls or in books, it was handed down from a teacher to a disciple by word of mouth. You see, it *had* to be done that way."

"Why?"

"Because if this kind of knowledge were to be broadcast to *everybody* it would be misunderstood. Take, for example, the Hindu doctrine of *Maya*, which includes the idea that all of our responses are conditioned. The teacher of this doctrine realized, as *we* now realize, that man lives in a world of automatic and semi-conscious responses. It is a world of action and reaction, of automatic thinking, feeling and moving, an unreal world which we, its puppets, mistake for a real world. This *phenomenal* world in which we live and have our being oscillates between two opposite extremes, and we can only find the *noumenal* world by withdrawing for a moment or two from the hurly-burly of the phenomenal world, and meditating. Then, and then only, may we discover something of a much more real nature. But we have to be specially prepared for the reception of such powerful ideas as these. Otherwise we are likely to misunderstand everything and be thrown into a state of despair."

"Yes, I suppose you are right, Maurice," I replied after a pause.

"Esoteric knowledge is hidden," continued Maurice. "*Not* in order to endow it with the glamour of mystery, but in order to

prevent its being misused and misunderstood. This was certainly true of the knowledge that was imparted by the old mystery religions of ancient Egypt and Greece. You will remember that two levels were recognized in the services and teachings of these old religions. There were the ceremonies which were performed in public, and, behind this façade, there was a special oral teaching which was imparted only to prepared 'initiates'. In other words these religions possessed knowledge which was given only to people who were able to receive it. Of course the initiation ceremonies did not necessarily confer understanding on the initiates who took part in them. The services and the rituals were merely outward signs that the initiates who were taking part in these ceremonies had reached a certain stage in their inner development, and that they were now in a position to receive more knowledge. I have been going into this question of initiation ceremonies lately and I have been finding out all that I can about Orphism and Pythagorism, and about the still more interesting ceremonies which were held on the island of Philae. There are, of course, certain connections between all of these religions, connections which indicate a common origin. We know almost for certain that Orphism and the doctrines expounded by Pythagoras came originally from Egypt, and the fact that the ancient Vedic Doctrine of re-incarnation is to be found in them suggests that they derived something also from the oral teachings of the Indian '*rishi's*'. In any case, it is obvious that all of this knowledge is of an esoteric nature, and that it came originally from a conscious source."

"You have always emphasized the word *conscious* Maurice, in our talks about different kinds of knowledge, and I assume that you are implying that the knowledge that you and I are both studying now has come down to us from men who lived on a higher level of being?"

Maurice nodded his head and then paused for a moment or two before asking me this question: "Has Ouspensky spoken to you yet about 'magnetic centre' and about the different kinds of influences under which man lives?"

"No."

Earlier photograph of Gurdjieff in Russia, *c.* 1916.

The Great Prayer, a demonstration in London.

"Well, there is no reason why I should not talk to you about this now. It is an exceedingly important idea. Sooner or later Ouspensky will tell you that we are exposed in life to two kinds of influences, which he calls influences A and influences B. Influences A are created in life itself and they are determined by such accidents as our nationality, the class to which we belong, our upbringing and our education. Influences B are quite different from influences A. Originally they came from a *conscious* source, but they were thrown afterwards into the general vortex of life, and they subsequently found expression in many different religions and philosophies. They thus became mixed with ordinary knowledge which we have called influences A. B-influences may sometimes be found, if one knows how to look for them, in certain objective works of art. Sometimes, but very rarely, influences C come to us more directly, and the knowledge which we receive in this way may even retain, to a varying extent, some connection with its conscious source. The knowledge which Gurdjieff and the Seekers of the Truth found is this kind of knowledge."

Here I interposed a question. "How does one know that the knowledge brought back by Gurdjieff *did* originally come from a conscious source?"

"Ah, that is another point I wanted to bring up. There are many people who are quite incapable of distinguishing between the different kinds of knowledge. They read the Bhagavad-Gita and the Gospels, and they find no essential difference between these sacred writings and the ordinary books which happen to be fashionable at the time. Such people possess no means at all of distinguishing books based on higher levels of knowledge from ordinary books, because they do not possess the discrimination faculty, which Ouspensky calls a 'magnetic centre'. Because of their lack of a 'magnetic centre' they are quite unable to detect a certain quality of 'otherness' in the Bhagavad-Gita and the Gospels. Those who possess a 'magnetic centre are able to develop their faculty further by practice, so that they become more and more discriminating in distinguishing books coming from a conscious source, from ordinary books. If a person's magnetic

centre is working properly that person may eventually meet someone who has established a direct contact with a conscious source of esoteric knowledge and, from this meeting, he may derive great benefit. Ouspensky has called this meeting of a person possessed of a magnetic centre with an individual who is capable of being his teacher 'the threshold, or the first step in the way'. It is at this meeting point that the person in question will be called upon to start what Ouspensky calls 'the ascent of the staircase' and of course the teacher he has met will have to help him to do this. At the far point of the staircase, that is to say at the place where it ends, the Fourth Way begins, and it begins on a higher level than that of ordinary life. What Ouspensky is doing for us, at the present time, is helping us to start the ascent of the staircase. You should never forget this fact, K., that the Fourth Way begins on a level which is slightly higher than the level of ordinary life. The mere fact that a pupil is engaged in ascending a staircase leading to a higher level of life does not necessarily mean that he understands everything he meets on the staircase. Nor does it mean that his teacher is going to explain everything to him. It only means that the pupil possesses sufficient initial understanding to realize the fact that the knowledge which he is receiving from his teacher comes from a higher and more conscious source than ordinary knowledge does. There are of course different grades of understanding and of 'being' amongst those who have managed to attain a higher level of knowledge and being. These differences are often symbolized by a diagram composed of three concentric circles. These circles are called the esoteric, the mesoteric and the exoteric circles respectively. But I expect that Ouspensky has already talked to you about this."

"No."

"Well, having started on this subject I had better finish it. The circle with which we, who are beginning to make use of the methods expounded by Gurdjieff's system, are now in touch is the outermost, or exoteric circle. The circle within this exoteric circle is the mesoteric circle, and the people who belong to the mesoteric circle possess many of the qualities and much of the knowledge possessed by those who inhabit the innermost circle of all, the

esoteric circle. The knowledge of the mesoteric circle differs, however, from that of the innermost esoteric circle in that it is knowledge of a much more theoretical nature. Members of the mesoteric circle know a great deal about a number of different things but their knowledge has not, as yet, found expression in their actions. In other words they *know* much more than they are able to *do*. But misunderstandings can never occur between different individuals living in the mesoteric circle, for they look at everything from the same standpoint. What is right for one of them is right also for the rest of them. Consequently there exists complete concord between the individuals living in this circle. And of course the understanding of individuals in the innermost esoteric circle is even greater. It is also of a much more practical nature, than the understanding of people in the mesoteric circle. Those who live outside of all of these three circles are people living in the region which is known to us as the 'region of the confusion of tongues'. This is a place in which nobody really understands anybody else. In other words, it is the ordinary world in which we are all living. Now I've talked enough, K., so let's go home."

Strange to say, Ouspensky spoke about the different circles of humanity at his next lecture. I have used the word lecture deliberately here, for the talk on the particular night took the form of a lecture, rather than of a discussion. Having described the various circles of humanity Ouspensky ended by giving an account of the distinctive attributes of the individuals who have managed to reach the innermost or esoteric Circle of humanity. He said that such highly developed people as these had attained the highest development which was possible for a man. "They possessed an indivisible 'I', all the forms of consciousness that were possible for a man, full control over their states of consciousness and a free and independent will. They were unable to perform any actions which were opposed to their understanding, or to possess an understanding which could not be expressed in action. Nor could there exist any discords amongst them, or any differences of opinion. Finally all their activities were properly co-ordinated."

Ouspensky ended his lecture by saying that true esoteric

schools that were employing Fourth Way methods had now become exceedingly rare in the West. They might even have disappeared entirely. There were of course, pseudo-esoteric schools, that is to say schools which previously had possessed true esoteric knowledge but which had lost all touch with the sources from which their knowledge originally came. Such schools as these could no longer be looked upon as being entirely reliable esoteric schools. Nevertheless they could still have a useful function to perform in the modern world. They could act in the capacity of intermediaries between those who belonged to these schools and people who had established contact with an entirely genuine source of knowledge. Ouspensky added that it often happened that ideas of an esoteric nature reached people originally by way of schools which had, in some ways to be regarded as being only pseudo-esoteric schools. So also had it to be accepted that man's understanding had now sunk to such a low level that spiritual truths might only be acceptable to people when they were mingled with an element of falsehood. This was the kind of adulterated truth with which pseudo-esoteric schools often dealt. They catered, in the way that certain forms of religions also catered, for people who possessed very little spiritual understanding. We had to keep in mind the fact that there were very great variations in different people's understanding of spiritual matters and provision for this had even been made by certain religions. For example, Tibetan Monasteries were sometimes surrounded by concentric circles in the form of courtyards, divided off from one another by high intervening walls. Southern Indian temples were also frequently designed in a similar way. The ordinary worshippers were allowed to enter only the outermost of the four circles or squares surrounding the temple, but in course of time they might be admitted to some of the inner courts. Access to the third court was granted only to the personnel of the temple, whilst access to the fourth or innermost court of all was the right only of the Brahmins. Ouspensky ended his discourse on the planning of Eastern temples by reminding us of something which he had said previously, namely, that only the best-prepared of the 'initiates' were admitted to the secret ceremonies celebrated in the

mystery religions of Ancient Greece and Egypt. He said that there was nothing arbitrary about the rules of these mystery religions and that they were all based on a well-defined principle, namely, the principle that progess along the line of *knowledge* had to keep step with a simultaneous progress along the line of *being*.

VIII

ALCHEMISTRY AND THE SEPARATION OF THE DROSS FROM THE GOLD

DURING THE FOLLOWING TWO YEARS the number of people attending Ouspensky's meetings at Warwick Gardens increased so much that he was compelled to arrange for groups to be held on more than one evening. New faces were also frequently to be seen at the Thursday evening meetings, and although a few of these newcomers soon gave up attending, our numbers steadily grew. Some people even ceased to attend after a few meetings because they were not getting what they had hoped to get from Ouspensky, namely a comforting gospel. Their defection was not in the least surprising to me when I took into consideration the hard nature of many of Ouspensky's answers. Some of Ouspensky's new recruits arrived with very definite views of their own and because Ouspensky had not immediately endorsed these, they ceased to attend. For example, an ardent spiritualist appeared one evening, and he asked Mr. Ouspensky his views about existence 'on the other side'. When Ouspensky answered to the effect that it was of far greater importance to study the conditions of life 'on this side' of the grave, he took umbrage. Another man objected to Ouspensky's constant use of philosophical terms in place of religious terms, and, concluding from the absence of such words as 'God' from Ouspensky's vocabulary that he must be an atheist, he also withdrew. It was obvious that quite a large number of people arrived at Warwick Gardens with their minds firmly closed against the entry of any new ideas.

At one of the meetings Ouspensky spoke of this promptness with which newcomers left him if they received anything which was not compatible with their own ideas. For example, if a person were told that it was possible for a man to evolve he immediately assumed that he could start evolving forthwith from his present state without any need for his discarding anything. In other words, he believed that he could carry on with him all his old views, habits, weaknesses and prejudices. This was clearly impossible, for all that would happen in such a case would be that everything in the most mechanical part of that man's personality would become more and more accentuated. No, we must be prepared to discard some of our old ideas and characteristics before we should be in a position to acquire new ones. "When we go to a tailor for new clothes," said Ouspensky, "we go because our old clothes are worn out, and when we get our new suits we don't put them on over our old clothes. It it necessary for us to 'take off' some of our former clothes as well as to put on the new ones. So also is it necessary for us to sacrifice certain old ways of thinking and behaving. Some of you seem to expect *me* rather than *yourselves* to make the necessary adjustments, whenever our views don't happen to tally. Why do you protect your private views so carefully? Is the truth in them so delicate that it will be promptly destroyed if it comes into contact with other views and notions? No, we must be brave enough to do what the old alchemists did. We must be willing to put our beliefs into the crucible and to submit them to the action of the furnace. On withdrawing the crucible from the fire we shall find that whatever was genuine in our old beliefs remains there intact and undestroyed by the heat. It is the dross and not the gold, which will be destroyed by being submitted to this test. Your beliefs should be treated as the alchemists treated the material with which they worked. If you dare to do this, you will find that nothing genuine will ever be lost."

Whilst expounding to us the ideas of Gurdjieff's system Ouspensky frequently made use of metaphors taken from old alchemical writings. He sometimes likened an individual to a retort which has been filled with a number of different metallic powders.

If the retort containing this mixture of different powders were to be tapped, or if it were lightly shaken, the distribution of the powders in the retort would be changed, so that some of the powder which was previously at the bottom of the retort might now be found above, and vice versa. If unity and permanence were ever to be attained by the mixture of metals it could only be attained by heating the retort so that the powders melted and formed an amalgam which possessed entirely new properties, such as the property of being a good conductor of electricity. Ouspensky likened the changes brought about by the mixture of metallic powders by heat to the change which might take place in ourselves by our inner struggles to awake. What represented the fire in us was the constant struggle taking place between 'Yes' and 'No' in ourselves, a struggle which was essential to our development. If a man made no efforts, then no change at all would take place in him, and he would remain as he was, without any inner unity. If, on the other hand, he began to struggle with his numerous identifications and with his many enslaving desires for the sake of some greater aim, then a slow process of fusion would begin to take place in him, and he would move very gradually in the direction of inner unity. Ouspensky advised us to start with the many little difficulties that we encountered in life and to use them as a means of drawing nearer to our distant aim. He added that sometimes it was necessary to *increase* life's difficulties deliberately, and to use these difficulties as material on which to work, "How does one increase life's difficulties?" asked somebody.

Ouspensky answered this question at some length. He said, "This is done in esoteric schools by choosing and by allotting to pupils tasks which necessitate their having to struggle with particular features in their personalities. Let us suppose for example, that a certain pupil suffers greatly from the form of identification known as 'inner considering'. In this case his teacher will allot him a task which constantly raises this weakness in him. This will mean that he has to observe and to struggle unceasingly against the particular features in his Personality which give rise to his inner considering. As a result of his efforts the

more real part of him, which has the desire to evolve, will be strengthened. But if the pupil in question takes every opportunity to avoid carrying out the special task allotted to him, this will show that, as yet, he is prepared to do very little for the sake of his aim. It is part of the teacher's work to uncover in this way his pupils' weaknesses so that the latter may see them and may realize his need to struggle against them. This is all part of the method employed in esoteric schools."

Ouspensky's statement about the work done in esoteric schools revived in my mind something which by now I had almost forgotten, namely a remark which had been made to me long previously by Maurice Nicoll after his return to London from the Chateau Prieuré at Fontainebleau. To celebrate his return I had invited him to dine with me at a small Bohemian Club, called the Hambone Club in Windmill Street. I was able to recall our conversation on that particular evening. I had been struck by some subtle change which seemed to have taken place in Maurice, a change which I found it very difficult to put into words. The only way in which I could express it was to say that Maurice was 'a little less like Maurice Nicoll' than he had formerly been. In the hope of finding some explanation of what had happened to him I asked him about the Chateau at Fontainebleau and about the methods that were being used there. After a long pause Maurice replied, "It is too difficult to describe Gurjieff's methods, K. All that I can really say about them is that they are based on two principles, namely on the principles of fatigue and irritation." Ouspensky's words about the need sometimes to increase the difficulties a pupil encountered in life now explained to me what Maurice had meant by saying that the work done at the Prieuré at Fontainebleu was based on fatigue and irritation. Evidently Gurdjieff was making great use at that time of this method of bringing to a pupil's notice his own chief weaknesses.

During the course of the next few meetings Ouspensky frequently spoke to us of schools, and of the nature of school-work. He was writing his book *A New Model of the Universe* at that time, and in this book he claims that the building of the Gothic cathedrals

was part of a collossal and cleverly devised plan which permitted the existence of entirely free philosophical and psychological schools in the rude, absurd, cruel and superstitious, bigoted and scholastic, Middle Ages. "These schools", he wrote, "have left us an immense heritage, almost all of which we have already wasted, without understanding its meaning and values." So also did Ouspensky sometimes refer, at the Warwick Gardens meeting, to a certain school which was nominally devoted to the study of painting, but which was actually engaged in the study of philosophical, psychological and religious ideas, a school which had existed in the nineteenth century. He said that this school met at Düsseldorf during the summer months, but that it moved south into Italy during the winter. According to Ouspensky, Ibsen had been a pupil at this nominal school of painting, but he had left it for a number of different reasons. In his play, *The Master Builder*, Ibsen gives some of his reasons for his defection, using his chief character, the Master Builder for this purpose. In this play the Master Builder explains that he is no longer interested in the building of churches and cathedrals, but that he is now content to construct small homes for ordinary men and women. In other words Ibsen has given up his former ambitious ideas of attaining a higher level of being, and he is content to live an ordinary life.

It gradually became apparent to us that Ouspensky was planning something which would be of assistance to him in carrying on his work. When we asked him about the future of the work he explained to us our position. He said that meetings and talking together, as we were now doing, was not enough. It was necessary that we should have facilities for living and for working together in small groups. He explained that what he was now engaged in planning would not be a school, in the true sense of that word, but that it would provide us with ample opportunities for studying 'school methods'. It would also mean that we should have to submit ourselves to a severer form of discipline than we had as yet submitted to. But the first step to all this would be the discovery and the purchase of a house and of an estate within easy reach of London. The house ought to possess sufficient ground to

provide us with ample opportunities for work on it. In the meantime, it would be necessary for us to think how to raise enough money for the purchase of an estate of this kind.

The search for a house now began in earnest, and a few months later, a suitable place, named Little Gaddesden was acquired at Hayes in Kent. The house had ten acres of land attached to it and Madame Ouspensky, who had hitherto lived in Paris, now came over to England and was installed in the new property. She was joined later by a number of the more senior of the people who were attending her husband's Warwick Gardens meetings. These provided a nucleus around which the new organization, which was not a school but which would be a means of studying school methods, could be formed. At week-ends a large number of people living in London came down to Hayes to work, either in the house or in its grounds.

The 'work', as it was termed now, took on a new lease of life and there could be no doubt that working together in groups was a very great help to self-study. Madame Ouspensky had a remarkable gift for detecting the weaknesses which we instinctively wished to hide from her, and from all other people. She saw us much more clearly than her husband did and Ouspensky now looked upon the exercise of Madame's 'insight' as being his wife's special function in the work. If anyone went to him now, in order to discuss any private difficulties he would say, "This is a personal matter and you should go and see Madame Ouspensky about it. *My* work is to teach you the ideas of the system, and not to discuss with you the more personal of your problems. Seek Madame Ouspensky's help."

Madame Ouspensky was undoubtedly a first-class diagnostician. She had a genius for penetrating our outer defences and for exposing, not only to *us*, but to *everybody else* our inner weaknesses. She did not mince the words with which she described to others what she had seen. Madame spoke English rather badly and, at first, I had considerable difficulty in understanding her, but her gestures often revealed more than her words. Fortunately there were members of the group who had a knowledge of Russian, as well as of English, and they were occasionally called

upon to act as interpreters. Turning to one of them Madame would exclaim: "He not understand. You explain." Then, after a nerve-shattering pause, the interpreter would fling across the quiet room the humiliating words that he had received, in Russian, from Madame Ouspensky. "Madame says that you are a warning to us all. You understand nothing at all about Gurdjieff's ideas, but repeat only Mr. Ouspensky's words. A clever parrot can do that as well as you can."

No one dealt more severely than Madame did with pretentiousness and insincerity. She described the talk of many people as the 'pouring of emptiness into emptiness'. Talking about the work rather than working, was for her 'singing about the work'. She was highly suspicious of all fine words, plans and promises, and if, after a time, nothing more genuine than these had appeared, then that particular visitor to the house would usually be dismissed. "Why you come here?" she would ask. "Madame knows why you come. You come here because you think this house has been arranged for the amusement of worthless and idle people. Madame has no time to waste on silly, empty people. You not come again." Her words had to be taken seriously, for if anyone had been dismissed in this way, he or she would find it very difficult to obtain permission to return.

It was clear to me from the very first that Madame Ouspensky had an immense admiration for her former teacher, Gurdjieff. She made use of the same picturesque and dramatic language in describing things, which he was reported to have used. I can recall her description of that most pretentious commodity in ourselves, our 'personalities' which we carry about with us and which we protect so carefully from all damage and criticism. Madame likened us to a group of cooks who bore on trays a number of hot-air pies. We displayed these pies proudly to everybody, in the hope that they would be properly admired and recognized as masterpieces of the culinary art. But these hot-air confections had to be very carefully protected from damage, for their crusts were exceedingly thin and within them there resided nothing but emptiness. "Why do you take so much care over things so pretentious and artificial as these?" she would ask. "Madame is

not in the least interested in what you are displaying to her. She is interested only in the more real part of you, the part of you that has the desire to grow."

I can still conjure up in my mind a picture of the scene on a Sunday afternoon in the drawing-room of the house at Hayes. What an amazing scene it was, and how dumbfounded my friends in Harley Street would have been had they been transported there! What would they have made of it all? Here were a number of presumably reasonable people sitting at the feet of a woman who did nothing but insult them. Yet the men and women she was abusing had been working, all the morning and also during the earlier part of the afternoon, for this same woman, either in her house, in her garden or in her fields. She had just referred to one of these voluntary helpers as 'a piece of dead meat almost entirely devoid of mind'. She had also reminded another person that the house at Hayes was not a Country Club, built solely for their private enjoyment. A Country Club! Had their ever been a Country Club, or any other kind of club, run on such peculiar lines as those on which the Little Gaddesden house was run? What would my professional colleagues in Harley Street have made of a relationship as peculiar as that which existed between this elderly Russian lady and the guests who were sitting literally at her feet? They would have made nothing out of it at all. What was happening in the drawing-room at Hayes was unique, for it was something which ran entirely counter to the direction of everything in ordinary living. As Mr. Ouspensky had once remarked, at a Warwick Gardens' meeting, work on oneself ran in the opposite direction to the direction of the forces which were streaming down the ray of creation. We were attempting to oppose many of our own mechanisms, to awaken ourselves out of our sleep, and to become human beings, instead of remaining, as we had been born, human machines.

"Was this great adventure on which we were engaged perhaps a little quixotic?" I sometimes asked myself, "Were we tilting at windmills like the bewitched Don Quixote, or were we engaged in a sound enterprise?" I would look round the room occasionally and my survey of my companions was, on the whole, a reassuring

one. As yet we had not gained very much from our erratic efforts to go against our own mechanisms, but the people who were sitting in that room seemed to me to be more genuine people than those whom I would have been likely to have met elsewhere on a Sunday afternoon. They had an aim and a direction in which they were struggling to move and, as Ouspensky had said at a very early meeting, it was important to possess an aim, and to work hard to attain it.

How could our aim be defined? They could be formulated best by saying that we were trying to render the more artificial parts of ourselves—our Personalities—more passive in order that the more real parts of ourselves—our Essences—should be given a better chance to grow. Our aim was contrary to the aim of the great majority of people. Cinema stars and actors, and indeed most people as well, set great store on that part of themselves which we at Hayes were trying to render less active. The majority of people deliberately cultivated their 'Personalities' and by doing this they gained a great deal of money and popularity, for the world thought very highly of 'Personalities'.

During the summer months, we often took our meals at Hayes out of doors, seated on the sloping sides of a small, natural amphitheatre existing in the large garden. The slopes of this amphitheatre had been equipped with a number of tiers of wooden seats, and, when the weather was fine, we sat on these boards, with our tin plates on our knees, looking like school children on a very uncomfortable summer outing. On the level ground far below us were placed four small tables and some half a dozen chairs. One of these tables was reserved for Madame Ouspensky and the remaining three tables were available for guests. It was no trifling ordeal this, to which the guests who were to arrive from London, would have to submit, this ordeal of taking their meal down there, seated in front of us all. If they knew anything at all about the arrangements at Hayes, and about the purposes of these arrangements—as they often did—they would know that every action, every change of expression, and even the manner in which they ate their meals would be carefully noted by Madame. Her observations would provide her with excellent material for

her comments, and it would be utterly useless for those whom she was observing to attempt to mislead her by assuming the external demeanour, and facial expressions, of people who were in a good *inner* state. She was never deceived by anything put on from outside. In my earlier visits to Hayes I had tried to do this and I had failed miserably. After passing through the garden gate, I had assumed the correct facial expression for a visitor, and had walked slowly and thoughtfully up the drive to the house, with the said expression on my countenance. But Madame had never been taken in by it. Nor was it only the casual guests from London, sitting there at the three reserved tables below us, who were in danger of a public demonstration of their private pecularities. We who sat on the tiers of seats above them were equally exposed to Madame's scrutiny and her comments. "Mrs. T. is very angry with us today," Madame would suddenly announce. "She is sorry she ever came here." "Miss R. do not forget what I have told you." And, with an upward tilt of the chin, a change in her expression, and an imaginary mirror in her hand, Madame would turn herself into a cinema Star, preparing for a photograph to be taken.

"But why all this public mockery of our personalities?" I would sometimes ask myself. "Was everything connected with our personalities necessarily bad?" No, but Gurdjieff's system had an entirely different conception of the nature of man and of the different elements which entered his being from the conceptions held by the great majority of people. Gurdjieff and Ouspensky gave a different meaning to the word 'Personality', a meaning closely linked with the root word 'persona' from which the term 'personality' has been derived. The 'persona' of Greco-Roman days was the mask behind which the old classical actors played their parts. But unfortunately there was an essential difference between the masks which these old actors wore and our own masks or 'personalities'. Whereas the Greek actors used their masks deliberately for the purpose of producing certain impressions on their audiences, it was our masks which used and controlled *us*, rather than we them. Whether we liked it or not, we were compelled to play the roles which our personalities had laid

down for us. We had little, or no choice, in the matter. We were compelled to behave as they made us behave, and, what complicated the situation still further, was the fact that, we ourselves had very little awareness of *how* we were behaving. We had still less knowledge of the psychological attitudes which were responsible for our behaviour, and for such activities as our thinking, our feeling and our moving. Hence the urgent need for help in discovering the nature of our inner attitudes, and the external behaviour for which these inner attitudes were responsible. Hence also the necessity for our seeing ourselves much more clearly, aided by people who possessed the clear insight of Madame Ouspensky. It was not a pleasant process, this seeing ourselves as we really were, and not as we had imagined ourselves to be, but it was a highly necessary preliminary to any form of inner development.

One of Gurdjieff's favourite sayings was the exceedingly bleak statement that 'Work began with a realization of one's own nothingness'. This was far from meaning that there was nothing at all of any value in us, and that our lives were therefore worthless. It meant only that hitherto, we had been regarding as important the wrong part of ourselves, and that there was within us something which was of far greater consequence and value to us than our personalities. The realization of the existence within us of something much more real than our personalities comes only when we have brought about an act of separation within ourselves, and Madame Ouspensky was of immense help to us in carrying out this difficult alchemical process of separating the gold from the dross. So also was working together on various tasks of great assistance to us in seeing our own personalities. An example will make this clearer. On a certain Sunday at Hayes two people, myself and Mr. M. attained great knowledge of ourselves by beating a carpet together. We had been selected to work as partners because we were of very different types and we displayed this difference very clearly in our carpet beating. My colleague, Mr. M. started by sitting down to elaborate the most wonderful plans for the coming activity. He then got up and slowly collected a great deal of equipment, before anything in the way of the actually beating of the carpet was actually begun. A special kind of rope

had to be obtained and a certain length of it stretched, at a calculated height, between two conveniently placed trees. After these preliminaries had been achieved special sticks had to be found, grasped in a certain way and held at the correct angle for carpet-beating. These elaborate preparations of Mr. M.'s reduced me to such a state of dither and exasperation that, in the absence of a carpet, I would willingly have slung Mr. M. over the rope, and have beaten him soundly, with any stick which I could have laid my hands upon. Doubtless Mr. M. was equally infuriated with me, and with my entirely slapdash and haphazard method of carpet-beating. I can confidently recommend carpet-beating, in carefully chosen couples, as a method of seeing our personalities much more clearly. I can also advocate the same procedure as a cure for the common illusion that anyone is able to exercise complete control over his feelings—if there be any people who still retain this absurd belief. In one brief session of carpet-beating Mr. M. and I gained more psychological insight about different types of people than we should have gained by a year's study of the books of Freud, Adler and Jung.

IX

LYNE PLACE IS MOBILIZED FOR WAR

THREE YEARS PASSED and the number of Ouspensky's followers increased so greatly that by the year 1936 the house at Hayes was too small to serve the purposes for which it had been bought. A much bigger house and estate were necessary if all the requirements of the work were to be met. Consequently everybody was asked to be on the look out for a larger property coming into the market. After a few months of search and of waiting a more suitable house, and a larger estate were found and purchased. The house, called Lyne Place, was in the neighbourhood of Virginia Water, and attached to it were about a hundred acres of farm-land. This would provide the outdoor workers with a great deal to do, and it would be work, moreover, of a very useful nature.

There was much to attend to in the house before we could move into it, for it had been allowed to get into a bad state of repair. By this time there were many specialists and experts 'in the work', men who, by profession, were architects, engineers, or builders, and there were also many amateur craftsmen with an excellent knowledge of carpentry, engineering and plumbing. It was under the guidance of all these experts that the necessary alterations and repairs were now carried out.

Three months later, Ouspensky and Madame Ouspensky took up their residence at Lyne Place, and they were joined by a number of people who were able, and were willing, to live out of

London. During the week-end as many as seventy people would sometimes arrive by car or train from London to work in the house, in the garden and on the farm-land. Ouspensky and Madame Ouspensky planned to make us, so far as this was possible, into a self-contained and a self-supporting community. They succeeded in doing this, for, by the end of two years we were growing our own wheat, milling our own flour, baking our own bread, spreading on it our own honey, and growing all our own vegetables. The orchard gave us plenty of home-grown fruit, and in order that none of these fruits should be wasted, a fruit-drying apparatus was erected in an outhouse. This fruit department was presided over, very suitably, by a Singhalese teacher of Oriental languages, with Buddhist and vegetarian principles. All of the special departments at Lyne Place were placed in the charge of one or other of the many residents who now lived there. In course of time other new departments were opened, including a saw-mill, sheep, a dairy, and ploughing, sowing, market-gardening, carpentry and engineering departments.

But in Madame's words; 'Every plus has its own minus qualities', and although we had gained much by moving into larger premises, we had also lost something. One of the most obvious losses was that because we were now so many, we saw much less of the two Ouspenskys. This meant that we received less personal guidance from them, and were left more to our own devices. We were no longer a big family, but were now acquiring the attributes of an Institute. Yes, the older amongst us were forced to accept the fact that we had lost something by becoming bigger.

Fortunately, I continued to see Madame Ouspensky very frequently, and I gained a great deal from her vigorous handling. I happened to be exceptionally well equipped with those mechanical contrivances which are known in the work as 'buffers'. These are mechanisms by which we avoid the uncomfortable jolts that are felt when two entirely contradictory things in our personalities happen to clash with one another. Another way of describing 'buffers' would be to say that they are 'blind-spots' in ourselves which prevent us from seeing how frequently we are wrong. Or, as Ouspensky preferred to put it, 'Buffers are the means by

which we can prove that we are always right!' I possessed an extremely efficient set of 'buffers' with which to keep myself comfortable and to avoid jolts, and Madame's drastic methods were necessary to make it possible for me to see the many contradictions in my character. More delicate handling of me would have been completely useless. I was therefore fortunate to have so rigorous a person as Madame to point out the many contratradictory 'I's' in my psychological make-up.

Madame Ouspensky had an entirely different role in the work to that of her husband. Ouspensky was a scientist, a philosophical writer and a one-time journalist, and this training had made him particularly skilful in expounding to us the philosophical ideas of the system. He was able to clarify these ideas to people who had never before read any books of a philosophical nature. But Ouspensky possessed less psychological insight than his wife and, so far as I could see, he never looked at the ideas of the system from a religious standpoint. When any of his followers regarded them from this angle and quietly substituted for the philosophical term, 'the Absolute', the religious term, 'God', that individual was immediately called to order. "We are not studying the way of the *monk*", Ouspensky would remark, "we are students of the Fourth Way and, this being so, we should use the language which is appropriate to the system. Otherwise we shall all be plunged into confusion."

With Madame Ouspensky things were quite different. She knew nothing at all about science, but she had a very strong religious sense. Not that she confined her attention entirely to the religion in which she had been brought up, the religion expounded by the Greek Orthodox Church. She had a very great liking for the ancient traditional knowledge of India and on Sunday afternoons we often listened to readings taken from such books as the *Sermons of Buddha* or the *Bhagavad-gita*. She also had extracts read from the Tao, and from the writings of that great Sufi genius, Jalal'uddin Rumi. The Christian extracts were usually taken from that great work of the Early Desert Fathers, the *Philo-kalia*.

At first sight it looked as though Gurdjieff's system of ideas would come into conflict with orthodox Christian teaching, but

we found that it seldom did. The system looked upon man as being a machine which responded automatically to the stimulations it received from its environment. So also did it regard man as being composed only of matter, like everything else on the earth and in the heavens. The philosophy of the system had therefore all the attributes of a materialistic and mechanistic philosophy. But, as has already been pointed out, a closer examination of the system showed that its materialism was of a very different nature to the materialism of science. This was because the system credited matter with psychic properties. The finer the matter, the greater was its intelligence.

Looking back, as I now do, on the ideas of the system, as received from Ouspensky, I now make the interesting discovery that I learned from him that *matter* could be turned into *energy* and that *energy* could be converted back into *matter* long before I read of this in the writings of the physicists themselves. So also did I learn from Gurdjieff's system that denser matters might be permeated by finer and more intelligent matters, in the same way that a sponge might be permeated with water and by the gases dissolved in that water. The latter idea explained many things to me which previously had been inexplicable. Now, although Gurdjieff's system regarded man as being a machine, it was not entirely deterministic in its outlook, for it also taught that if man struggles long enough, he can become other than the machine he was born as. Another method of expressing the same idea would be to say that by the use of certain methods a man can increase the amount of finer matters with which he is permeated, and that by doing this he attains a higher level of being. An examination of Gurdjieff's ideas suggests to me very strongly that they were taken from many different sources, some of which were of a religious nature. The methods of inner development taught by the system resemble very closely those taught in Hinduism and in Buddhism. This is particularly true of the special exercises used for the purpose of 'self-remembering' and for acquiring an increased sensation of the body. Both Buddhism and Gurdjieff place great emphasis on the need for training the attention, and the exercises recommended by the Buddhists for the cultivation

of Satipatthana, or Mindfulness, are equally serviceable to those who are struggling to 'remember themselves'.

Because of this similarity I am convinced that Gurdjieff obtained a great deal from Hindu and Buddhist sources. After the death of Ouspensky many of his followers, including myself made contact with the source of Ouspensky's knowledge, namely Gurdjieff himself, and what struck some of us very forcibly was the great importance which Gurdjieff attributed to the state of the body. He gave us special instructions and special exercises for the training of our attention, for the relaxing of our muscles, and for evoking body sensations in us, exercises which were entirely new to us. By carrying out these special exercises we learned how important it was to become aware of our bodies as a preliminary to becoming aware of ourselves as wholes. Whenever Gurdjieff talked to us about 'self-remembering' he told us that the first step to this was to become aware of our bodies and of the sensations which were coming to us from our bodies. Having taken up residence again within our bodies, after a long absence from them, it was comparatively easy for us to become aware not only of our bodies, but also of our various activities such as our movements, our thoughts and our feelings. Gurdjieff gave us a great many of these exercises for the training of our attention, for the relaxing of our muscles, and for the evoking of sensation in different parts of our bodies and they have been of the very greatest use to us. I now find that several of the exercises are similar to those used by the Buddhists. Ouspensky paid little attention to the state of the body. All that he had ever said to us on this all-important subject was that we lost a great deal of nervous energy through our muscular tensions. This being so he advised us to do our best to relax our muscles whenever they became tense.

Gurdjieff brought back from his Asiatic travels three different entities: a certain system of ideas, music and a number of special movements and dances of a highly complicated nature. These exercises were very difficult to perform, because the limbs of the dancers had often to move in different rhythms, and in different directions. This meant that any wandering of the dancer's attention was likely to throw everything into a state of hopeless

disorder. To make things still more difficult for those taking part in the movements we were sometimes told to do mental exercises at the same time, such as the exercise of counting backwards or of repeating foreign words to ourselves. These combined exercises not only helped as to gain more control over our attention but also acted as delicate indicators of our inner state. They recorded the smallest flickering of our attention, much as the slowly revolving drums in a physiological laboratory record the erratic beats of an animal's heart.

Madame Ouspensky suggested to me one day that it would be a good thing for me to take part in the special movement classes which were then taking place at Lyne. I agreed to do this. But it was no light task that I had undertaken, for it meant driving some twenty miles into the country at the end of a very hard day's work in London. It also entailed the carrying out of a number of highly exacting exercises after I had arrived at my destination. On many occasions I was tempted to accept the flimsiest of professional excuses as valid reasons for my not going down to Virginia Water on exercise evening. I told myself that I might be required at the hospital for some urgent case and not be available. There were indications also that a fog was forming and if it did form it would be likely to be very thick in the Thames Valley. In short, I discovered a great many reasons for my remaining in London, but I usually managed to resist them. One of the surprising discoveries, made after doing the exercises, was that instead of coming back to London exhausted, as I had expected, I drove back so full of energy that I had no desire at all to go to bed. I could offer no satisfactory explanation of the energizing effect which the exercises had had on me and this subject will be discussed again in a later chapter.

There is a right size and a wrong size for every enterprise and Ouspensky began to complain now that the number of his London followers was an unsatisfactory one and that there were two alternatives from which he could choose. He could either reduce the size of his London groups and carry on a more intensive work with certain selected pupils, or he could open the doors of Warwick Gardens wider and could encourage more people to take part in

the 'work'. If he chose the latter alternative and increased his following, it was inevitable that the character of his work would change, and that a new form would have to be given to it. What should he do? In the end Ouspensky chose the second of these two alternatives and this meant that a larger place than the room at Warwick Gardens would have to be found. Ouspensky also came to the conclusion that it would be necessary to organize some new society and to find a suitable name for this society which would act as a camouflage for our real activities. It was obvious to many of us that Ouspensky had always been a little apprehensive of the attitude of the British public authorities to his secret meetings. After his experience with the Russian police it was quite natural that he should be a little frightened of the British police. He felt that there was a possibility that they might suspect that he a Russian, and presumably a Bolshevik, was engaged in Communist activities.

A great deal of discussion took place about the sort of society which ought to be formed in order to provide a 'façade' for Ouspensky's real work. It also took a long time to find a suitable name of the said society. Eventually it was decided that, as the subject of psychology enjoyed a great prestige in England at that particular moment, it would be a good plan to form a learned society for the study of various forms of psychology, taught at different epochs of history. The name which was suggested and which was later adopted for the new society was the following mouthful—the Historico-Psychological Society. Few people liked the name, and fewer still have used it, but it was supposed to inform the public that we were engaged in an entirely innocent study of the Eastern doctrine of Metemsychosis, that is to say the study of the further evolution of man along conscious lines.

In course of time Ouspensky's plans were carried out and the Warwick Gardens house was replaced by a much larger house in Colet Gardens. The new premises included two large studios and a still larger hall capable of seating about three hundred people. Everything was now done in a business-like fashion. The articles of the Historico-Psychological Society were drawn up by a solicitor, and in order to allay Ouspensky's fears about the

police, I got in touch with Scotland Yard. A very understanding Inspector came to see me in Harley Street. He assured me that the police had never, for a moment, been in the least worried by Ouspensky's activities in Warwick Gardens, so that it was quite unnecessary for us to do anything about the matter. Indeed the Inspector showed so much understanding that our interview ended with my inviting him to attend one of our meetings, if he cared to do so. He seemed to me to be an eminently suitable person to take part in the activities of the new Historico-Psychological Society.

The further plans for the expansion of the work now went rapidly ahead. An Executive Council was formed which would supervise the many new activities which were anticipated in connection with the founding of the Historico-Psychological Society. Amongst the new enterprises suggested was the giving of public lectures in a hall with a seating accommodation which was greater than that offered at Colet Gardens. A few preliminary steps were also taken for the formation of a satisfactory library, which would undoubtedly be required if we were to embark, as we now intended to embark, on various lines of psychological and religious research. Some enthusiasts even went so far as to predict the appearance of an Historico-Psychological Journal.

But none of these grand plans was destined to be carried any further, for great forces and events on a cosmic scale were moving slowly towards a pre-determined end. Whether these great forces were planetary in origin I am unable to say, but they undoubtedly had a disruptive effect on the more highly evolved elements of the sensitive film which covers the surface of this planet, in other words on the human constituents of that great living organism known as organic life. The psychological state of these more highly evolved elements in organic life was rapidly deteriorating and it was obvious to most of us that disaster was imminent. Man was on the brink of one of his periodic outbreaks of madness, the periodic seizures to which Gurdjieff has given the name of outbreaks of 'reciprocal destruction'. The preliminary delusional stage of one of these widespread attacks of insanity had already occurred, and the next stage of complete psychosis was now

imminent. It was obvious that the political leaders of a number of different countries were reacting passively to the adverse stimulations which they were receiving from their earthly environment, and probably from the planetary world as well. They were delivering the usual misleading pre-war speeches in which their words clearly belied their actions. Whilst still mumbling words of peace they were hurriedly preparing for war. International tension was becoming greater and we all knew, without any shadow of doubt, that a very severe attack of 'reciprocal destruction' was about to occur.

We did not have to wait long for it. On the morning of September 3rd, 1939, I found myself standing alone on the lawn behind the house at Lyne, watching the children of the residents and of some of the visitors to the house clambering along the path which led upwards from the lake. *It* —the hideous and mad thing we had all been waiting for—had come, and the tension and the feeling of imminent disaster was no longer on the ascendant as it had previously been. We were actually at war, and the sense of relief which always follows the sounding of the first peals of a thunderstorm which has been long threatening was now being experienced. The disaster had actually come and had to be accepted as a grim fact. A few minutes previously I had been listening to the thin, unmusical voice of Mr. Neville Chamberlain announcing the stark news that Great Britain and Germany were now at war and, as though to drive this fact home to us all, the wail of a siren was heard coming from the distance. This was the main reason for my standing there watching the children hurrying up from the lake. They were ascending that path in order to find refuge in the house for the first air-raid of the war was now about to take place.

As I stood there my mind became crowded with old memories. Fifteen years had passed since Maurice Nicoll had made that first startling announcement to me in Harley Street about the coming of a war and of a war 'on a much larger scale than had ever happened before'. And it was these prophetic words of Gurdjieff which had brought me into touch with Ouspensky's teaching and which were responsible for my being there now, at that very moment, watching the children hurrying up from the lake to the

house. "There are great disasters ahead of us, K." Maurice had announced to me suddenly at the corner of Weymouth Street and Harley Street. "Not a flood as you suggest, K., but wars, revolutions and other world-upheavals, and on a much bigger scale than has ever happened on the earth before." And, naïvely believing —as I *had* believed then—in the automatic progress of mankind, I had refused to accept Gurdjieff's gloomy prophesies, calling Maurice's attention to the existence of the League of Nations and to man's formal outlawing of all wars. I remembered now how Maurice had gripped my arm and had said to me firmly and stubbornly, "It cannot work. K. In a few years' time the League of Nations will no longer exist!"

And how could it have been otherwise than this in a world of sleeping men, of men who said one thing and who did another thing? Can wars ever cease so long as humanity continues to live on the very low level of consciousness on which it lives. Why should 'tomorrow' be any different from 'today' to people who are at the mercy of so many blind and uncontrollable forces?

I looked at the last of the children disappearing into the house, and I felt utterly ashamed of myself, and of the generation to which I belonged. It was *we* middle-aged and supposedly responsible people who had made such a mess of everything and it was from these young and beautiful children that payment for our middle-aged stupidity was to be exacted. Then quite suddenly, I remembered I had a duty to perform to these same children, and that I must set about doing it immediately. A day or two previously a number of gas-masks had arrived at Lyne Place as a precaution against a possible gas attack. Their arrival had brought back into my mind the first gas attack made in Flanders some twenty years ago, and I recalled the piteous attempts we had made in Flanders to defend ourselves against, what was then, a new and an entirely barbarous mode of fighting. We had nothing better *then* than wet handkerchiefs dipped in alkaline urine with which to defend ourselves against the Hun's lung-burning gases. But now we possessed excellent snout-like appendages to fit on to our children's faces. We could claim to have made some progress since the First World War, namely progress in the arts of reciprocal

destruction. Everything was now repeating itself. The men who had organized the First World War were now getting ready for the Second World War. The nations were again manœuvring for position in the same way that they had manœvred for position when I was still a youth. The same old slogans were being uttered. As Hugh Callaway has put it in his pamphlet *Bridge to World Man*:

> We seemed to be travelling around a walled-in circular tract that passed through darkness to light, and through light to darkness. It made me think of a kind of Inner Circle with all the points where lines led elsewhere hidden by huge posters: 'Continue round for Justice, Liberty and Democracy'. And we were the passengers being driven once more towards the darkness.[1]

Everything was the same as it was on the eve of the First World War. We were all being bamboozled again by those ragged old group concepts about Justice, Liberty and Democracy. No, on further thought I realized that everything was not identical. There was a growing number of young people who no longer *believed* in the walled-in circular system on which we were all travelling. These young people had acquired a wider vision and had realized that if man's actions were ever to be changed a change had first to be made in man himself. The general level of man's consciousness had to be raised a little. In other words the remedy had to be a spritual one, in the sense in which I now used the word spiritual.

What is a 'spiritual remedy' and what do we mean by the word 'spirit'? The Church has never defined this word 'spiritual' very clearly but the Hindu calls the spiritual entity in man the Atman. It is that higher part of oneself with which contact is established in the psychological state known to the Hindu as '*sat-chit-ananda*' (being-consciousness and bliss). In other words it is pure consciousness without thought and to my way of thinking it corresponds with the 'peace which surpasses understanding' mentioned in the Gospels.

The plans which had been prepared at Lyne for the outbreak of war were now put into action. Madame Ouspensky had previously

[1] Hugh Callaway, *Bridge to World Man*. London Press.

made arrangements for as many of the London women and children as possible being accommodated in the main house at Lyne, and in the various cottages scattered about the estate. She had always felt that they would be safer at Lyne than in London and ample preparation had long been made for feeding them. A big concrete-lined storeroom had been constructed in the vicinity of the house and this was now chock-a-block with hams, dried fruit, jars of salted butter, sugar, oatmeal, flour and provisions of every kind. When people have known for a long time, as we had known, that a war was about to come, it is easy for them to display foresight. Madame had been warned by Gurdjieff of the coming of war and she had had a previous experience of national disasters of this kind. She had known the confusion and the terror of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and she knew what it was like to be short of food. Ample preparations had therefore been made at Lyne for the coming of war. Her carefully made plans were now put into action at Lyne and, remembering suddenly my own responsibilities for the children taking refuge in the house, I followed them to perform my duty of teaching them how to fit those pig-like appendages to their faces. What a mess we grown-ups had made of world affairs!

Prepared though we had been for the outbreak of war, we experienced greater and greater difficulty in carrying on the work in London and Virginia Water. At first, meetings were held at Colet Gardens but as the air raids increased both in severity and in number these became less and less frequent. The activities at Lyne also had to be seriously curtailed. In the end, these activities became so few that Ouspensky and Madame Ouspensky decided it would be far better for them to leave England and to go to America, where work was still possible. Consequently Madame Ouspensky, and those in a position to accompany her, sailed for New York. Three weeks later she was followed by her husband. The Ouspensky had only one motive in life, namely the carrying on of 'the work' and because this was no longer possible in England, they had no alternative other than that of going elsewhere. With the departure of the Ouspenskys and with the scattering of the group, work in England virtually came to an end.

How scared I had been of that word 'group' fifteen years ago, when Maurice Nicoll told me that there was a group of people in Kensington and that they were engaged in the work of building an ark. Now that I had better knowledge of the symbolic meaning of the word 'ark', I realized how necessary such things as arks and groups became when 'a flood of waters covered the earth and when everything was in a state of confusion'. It was a relief to meet 'work people' from time to time and to discuss work ideas with them. I held a number of small meetings in my house in Harley Street which were a help to me, at any rate, and which may also have been a help to the people attending them.

X

THE DEATH OF OUSPENSKY

THE WAR YEARS PASSED SLOWLY for these who had remained in London. From time to time satisfactory news reached us from across the Atlantic. We heard that a farm had been bought in New Jersey and that various activities were being carried on there. We also learned that meetings were being held both in New York and at the house at Mendham in New Jersey. The Americans appeared to be interested in the 'work' and many of them were joining Ouspensky's group in New York. Then news of a less favourable kind reached us, to the effect that Madame Ouspensky had been ill and that Ouspensky himself was far from being well.

Another year passed, and then, quite suddenly, the madness which Beelzebub, the chief character in Gurdjieff's book *All and Everything*, calls the process of the periodic reciprocal destruction ceased. A letter now reached us in which it was stated that as Ouspensky would shortly be returning to England the Colet Gardens premises in London should be got ready for meetings. This news brought great relief to everybody, for we had been forced to face the possibility that the Ouspenskys would never return to us. The Eastern teaching which Gurdjieff had brought back to Russia might then come to an end in England so that nothing remained of it except a number of rapidly fading memories of Ouspensky's meetings. None of the ideas of the system had been recorded as yet in book form, and this being so, they might be

lost to the Western world for good. Because we ourselves had gained so much benefit from Ouspensky's clear exposition of Gurdjieff's ideas, we felt that this would be highly regrettable. At all costs something must be done to prevent this. We were aware of the fact that Gurdjieff, the source of all these valuable ideas was still alive, but he must be a very old man by now, and he might die at any moment. The situation seemed to be a highly critical one for the 'work'.

We were mightily relieved, therefore, when a letter arrived which told us that Ouspensky was now much better, and that he would be arriving in England in about three weeks' time. Next came news that he had sailed, and that he would reach Southampton on a certain date. A car was at the Southampton Docks to meet him and he was driven straight from there to Lyne Place and installed in his old quarters. But the Ouspensky who had come back to us was not the Ouspensky we had formerly known. He had aged by many years, both in mind and in body, and there were other changes in him as well.

Three or four weeks later meetings were held in the great hall at Colet Gardens. Ouspensky invited questions and the answers which he returned to them seemed to indicate two things. The first was that he appeared to be deeply disappointed with the results obtained in London from the work, and that he intended now to make radical changes in it. It was equally obvious to us that Ouspensky would be unlikely to be able to carry out whatever he intended to do. It would be too much to say that Ouspensky was a broken man, but he appeared to me to be a man who had lost all of his former enthusiasm and drive.

I saw him several times, both at the official meetings held at Colet Gardens, and also in private discussions in his room at Lyne Place. These private talks with him confirmed my impression that he was a very deeply disappointed man. Something had gone wrong and somebody had failed but who it was that had failed was never very clear to me. In all probability we were all implicated in the failure which Ouspensky appeared to be feeling so deeply.

What justification had Ouspensky for this pessimism? All of

us owed an immense debt to this conscientious man who had presented Gurdjieff's ideas to us with such patience and clarity. I respected and admired him, but I had never enjoyed the warm relationship with Ouspensky that I was afterwards to enjoy with Gurdjieff. My dealings with Ouspensky resembled the dealings of a sixth-form boy and prefect with his Headmaster. We had discussed school matters together, in a formal and amiable manner, but we have never met as two fellow human-beings. Our relationship had remained the impersonal one which had been established years ago when I had paid him that formal call at his lodgings in Gwendyr Road. I am of the opinion that this was *my* fault rather than his fault for I had never made a deliberate effort to break through the barrier between us. Nor had I ever sat up, with Ouspensky at Lyne Place, till the early morning hours as many others had done, over a bottle of wine, and thus enjoyed the freedom which wine confers on those who are afflicted with the weakness of inner considering. This would undoubtedly have improved my relationship with him and I now regretted my abstemious habits.

Another fact that was obvious to us was that Ouspensky's thoughts at this time were very much occupied with the subject of 'eternal recurrence' and with the memories which might remain of previous circles of existence. The theory of 'eternal recurrence' had always been of great interest to the two Ouspensky's. It was based on the idea that our lives describe circles in the fourth dimension of time and that the point of death coincides with the point of re-birth. This theory is usually attributed to Nietzsche but it existed long before Nietzsche popularized it in his writings. References to the theory of 'eternal recurrence' are to be found in Justin Martyr's book *Dialogue with Trypho, the Jew*. In this work, Justin Martyr makes the following comment on certain philosophers:

> They affirm that the same things shall happen always, and further that you and I shall live again, in like manner, having become neither better nor worse.

This remark is introduced by Justin Martyr, quite casually into a

certain discussion, without his making any comments upon it.

Ouspensky has discussed at some length the subject of 'eternal recurrence' in his book *A New Model of the Universe*. He tells us that he, himself, had sometimes had the conviction: 'All this has happened to me before'. A conviction which many people have had. He describes how he experienced this feeling very strongly when he was a child. He gives an account of an early occasion on which this happened. It was when he and his mother were visiting together a building which was later to be Ouspensky's school. They walked together down a long corridor and his mother complained that she did not know where they had to go in order to find the Headmaster's study. But the boy Ouspensky knew. He told his mother that, a little farther along the corridor, they would find a passage down which they would have to go. At the bottom of the passage there would be two steps and a window in the wall, through which they would be able to see the lilies growing in the Headmaster's garden. And his mother found precisely what her little son had foretold that she would find, including the sight of lilies growing in the Headmaster's garden.

Ouspensky uses the idea of 'eternal recurrence' as the theme of his only novel *The Strange Life of Ivan Osokin*. During the last few weeks of Ouspensky's life this theory of recurrence seemed to have become of immense importance to him. He spoke of it frequently to those in daily contact with him and he insisted on his being driven in a car to all the houses in which he had lived, or which he had visited, since his first arrival in England. Tired though Ouspensky was he undertook long motor journeys to Sevenoaks, to Hayes and to odd villages which he had previously known, such as the village of Siddlesham in which Maurice Nicoll had a cottage. He appeared to want to fix these landmarks of the past more firmly in his memory so that he would be able to remember them 'next time'. He also mentioned the possibility of establishing contact 'next time' with the work at a much earlier date. Some of us recalled that he had once remarked that if a man could recollect what had previously happened, and if he had also developed even a small amount of will he would be able to alter the whole course of his next recurrence. There was obviously

something in Ouspensky's life which he fervently wished to change in the next recurrence.

Having accomplished his wearisome task of revisiting all the places he had previously known, Ouspensky retired to his room at Lyne Place, and he never really left it. I knew that Ouspensky was disappointed by the fact that he had not been able to establish any direct contact with some 'school' as the result of the publicity obtained by the appearance of his new book *In Search of the Miraculous*. "How interesting it will be if we manage now to make contact with an esoteric school as the result of the publication of my book." He had made this remark to me shortly after the appearance of *A New Model of the Universe*. But alas, no strange letters or visitors arrived at Lyne Place, and his failure to make any contact with an esoteric school was clearly a disappointment to him.

The last time I saw the man to whom I owed so much was two days before he died, but he was so ill then that only a few words passed between us. I think that he was aware of the fact that although I accepted all that he had to tell me about Gurdjieff's teaching I rejected the theory of recurrence. Like all the other answers suggested for the difficult riddle of birth, life and death, the idea of 'eternal recurrence' cannot be discussed or argued about in any simple fashion. It is an enigma which is very closely linked with the great problem of time, and all that I can say personally about the theory of 'eternal recurrence' is that it has never appealed to me either emotionally or intellectually. Because of this it has now been dismissed from my mind for good.

A memorial service for Ouspensky was celebrated at the Russian Church in Palace Road, a service which all of his followers living in or near London attended. The feelings which were dominant in me during this service were feelings of extreme gratitude. Ouspensky had taught me so much that was of immense value to me, and he had expounded difficult ideas with such clarity that I was, and I shall always be, grateful to him. When we doctors take our Hippocratic Oath, after qualifying as medical men, we swear to regard our teachers of the healing arts with the esteem with which we regard our parents. Looking back,

as I did during the memorial service, at all that I had learned from Ouspensky I came to the conclusion that he had instructed me in an art which was far more difficult to impart to a student than the art of medicine. Consequently, at the memorial service I vowed to reverence Ouspensky's memory in the same way that my Hippocratic Oath required of me that I should reverence those who had taught me medicine. I should recall him with the same feeling of gratitude as that with which I remembered my parents.

Did Ouspensky's death mean that the 'work' had come to an end in this country? This was the question which we were all asking now. It was a problem which had to be discussed, and the sooner the better. Ouspensky had never made any provision for the carrying on of his work after his death. And as I have previously said, during his lifetime he had never delegated any of his responsibilities to anyone else. Because of this there was nobody possessed of sufficient authority even to call a meeting now.

The difficulty we were in was overcome by putting the Historico-Psychological Society into action. Its Council met, talked, reviewed the whole situation and came to no final conclusion. Then somebody made a very sensible suggestion. He pointed out that the senior person in the work now, and the only person who possessed any authority, was Madame Ouspensky. Why not send a letter to her, or if necessary, a messenger, asking for her advice? Clearly this was the wisest thing for the Council of the Historico-Psychological Society to do and we did it. We sent Madame Ouspensky a letter and two weeks later her reply came back. As the letter's exact meaning was still in doubt, we decided to dispatch two envoys to America and we awaited their return as patiently as we could. A reply was received from America two weeks later. It was of such a potent nature that, like many of Madame's actions, it split the members of the Council into two. Her message consisted of the following seven words: 'Get in touch with Gurdjieff in Paris'. 'How exciting!' was my own immediate reaction to it. But unfortunately there were members of the Council who were of a contrary opinion. They felt that it would be an act of disloyalty, and even of treachery, to establish contact now with a man from whom, for some reason or other,

Ouspensky had parted many years previously. Luckily there were people who saw things in an entirely different light from this. Nobody knew why Ouspensky had finally broken off all connections with Gurdjieff, and it was not our business to know why. There were many things of much more importance than this, and the fact that Gurdjieff was the fountainhead of all our teaching was one of these. The second reason for making contact with Gurdjieff was that Madame Ouspensky, now the senior person left in the work, had instructed us to do this. I had no doubt at all that this was the right thing for us to do and I intended to do it, even if it meant losing some of my oldest friends by going over to Paris. What I personally wanted, above everything else, was to continue my study of the 'system' and to do this I should have to go to Paris. I should, therefore, go to Paris even if Gurdjieff turned out to be the Devil himself, as some people seemed to believe that he was.

XI

RUE DES COLONELS RÉNARDS

THE LETTER WE WERE EXPECTING arrived within a few days. It was from Aubrey Wolton, one of the two emissaries we had previously dispatched to America when the meaning of Madame Ouspensky's reply was in doubt. The letter was to the effect that the sooner we joined him, the better. A number of people had already arrived in Paris and many more were expected. On hearing from us he would book us rooms, in the Belfast Hotel. A reply telegram was immediately dispatched and next day, that is to say on October 2nd, 1948, my wife and I found ourselves gliding down a dark spiral in the direction of the gleaming lights of Le Bourget aerodrome. The spiral flattened out, the land rose up to receive us, and, with the gentlest of cushioned bumps, we found ourselves speeding along the tarmac in the direction of the brightly illuminated hangar.

We were in Paris, and at the gateway of a great adventure—a meeting with a man who had become for us a legendary figure—Gurdjieff! How frequently in the past we had wondered what he would be like if we were ever to meet him, and now within a few hours we were actually going to meet him. How would he receive us? Were all the stories that were told about him true? No, that was unlikely. Stories told about a man as out of the ordinary as Gurdjieff was, were very seldom true and I would pay no attention to all the gossip, and even slander, that one heard about him. Even if he were the Devil himself, there was no

reason why I should not meet him. All that it would be advisable to do, if Gurdjieff were the Devil, would be to select a specially long spoon whilst having supper with him! I was prepared for anything, and I also had great faith in Madame Ouspensky's judgement, and in her good sense.

We reached Paris too late for anything to happen that night, beyond having supper and retiring early to bed. We were to meet Aubrey Wolton on the following morning, and that would be extremely interesting for he had been over a week in Paris and would have many interesting things to tell us.

E. V. Lucas writes, in one of his travel books, that:

> . . . the pleasure of entering and re-entering Paris, in the evening, is only equalled by the pleasure of stepping forth into the street next morning, in the sparkling Parisian air, and smelling again the pungent Parisian scent and gathering in the foreign look of the place.

Next morning Paris fully lived up to this description of it, when we set forth to our meeting with Wolton at a café in the Avenue Wagram, a few hundred yards from the Arc de Triomphe. He was already at the café when we reached it, and, as we had expected, he had much to tell us. He began by saying that Gurdjieff had received him in a very friendly manner on his arrival in Paris from America. He had also seen a good deal of him since. "You get the feeling," said Wolton, "when you first meet him, that he is taking you into the palm of his hand and that he is estimating your worth. He then either accepts you or else puts you back into your place. Those of us who have arrived in Paris get the general impression that we have managed to pass this preliminary test and that, so far, things are progressing favourably. I believe also that he is particularly interested in what is now happening in London, and that he will not only permit, but that he will even encourage people to come over to Paris to meet him. Bennett and his following arrived here yesterday, and more people from London are expected to arrive tomorrow."

Wolton then gave us a brief history of what had happened to Gurdjieff during the last twenty years, that is to say since he and Ouspensky had parted. He told us that in 1924 Gurdjieff had

visited America and had organized there what could be looked upon as being a branch of the Institute for the Harmonious Development of man. Gurdjieff had also taken to America a troop of followers well trained in the movements, and with their help he had given a very successful public demonstration of the movements and the dances. Afterwards Gurdjieff had returned to Fontainebleau with the intention of returning to America during the following year, taking people to perform the special movements. But a very bad motor accident had occurred shortly after his return to France, and this had prevented him from carrying out his former plans. It took Gurdjieff over a year to recover from the injuries he had sustained in the accident and, as he lay there in bed, struggling painfully back to health, he had decided that, in future, his work would have to take a different form. The oral transmission of his ideas would have to be curtailed and his teaching would have to be embodied in a series of books which he was now actually engaged in writing. Gurdjieff had never had any personal desire to write, but authorship had been thrust upon him by circumstances. Having arrived at this decision, that he must write, Gurdjieff set about his new task with characteristic vigour. He wrote wherever he happened to be at that time, in his flat, in a café, or in his car, which was often to be seen drawn up by the roadside during one of his many long motoring tours. Previously Gurdjieff's followers had enjoyed an easy access to him, but now, when they came across him sitting alone at a café they could never be sure whether he was engaged in writing his book, or whether he was available for a talk.

After ten long years of work Gurdjieff had almost completed his two books. There was to be a third work also but this was to be available only to certain selected people. His first book was a strange allegorical work called *Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson* but it is better known now by its sub-title *All and Everything*. It was *All and Everything* because, like Gurdjieff's oral teaching, his book contained many different ideas which were put together to make up an all-embracing whole. In *All and Everything* Gurdjieff makes use of the ancient legend about Beelzebub, the legend that Beelzebub had been compelled to expiate a fault,

committed in his youth, by having to wander during his later years, in the remoter and the obscurer regions of the universe. He was accompanied on these endless travels of his by his favourite grandson, Hassein, and also by his own personal servant, old Ahoon. They travelled together about the universe in a space-ship and they visited in their endless wanderings many planets including, that ill-favoured and very remote planet, the earth. Beelzebub's grandson Hassein, is described in the book as being particularly interested in the earth-dwellers and he puts to his grandfather a great many questions about their queer way of behaving. He asks: "What is the meaning of these periodic out-breaks of reciprocal destruction which occur amongst these strange earth-beings, the outbreaks which they call by the name of war? What has gone so wrong with their evolution that they comport themselves unlike that of any of the other three-brained beings dwelling in our great universe?" The answers which Beelzebub gives to such questions as these provide the author with an opportunity for narrating the tragic history of the human race. Beelzebub tells Hassein that it has all been due to the great mistake of fitting men with an organ called Kundabuffer which makes them see everything in a topsy-turvy fashion. Gurdjieff's own description of his book is that it is 'an objectively impartial criticism of the life of man'. He explains that his object in writing this book is 'to destroy, mercilessly, without any compromise whatsoever in the mentation and feelings of the reader, the beliefs and views by centuries rooted in him about everything, existing in the world.

We had heard nothing at all about Gurdjieff's literary efforts prior to our arrival in Paris but Aubrey now told us that, in all likelihood, there would be readings from the typescript of Gurdjieff's first book at some of the meetings held in his flat. He warned us that these readings often lasted about two hours and then, in all probability, we should be asked to stay to lunch or to supper. He added, "And I'd better tell you about these meals, for newcomers sometimes find them rather difficult. But, of course, one gets accustomed to anything in time, and even to meals in Gurdjieff's flat."

"Why should meals there be difficult?" I asked. "Is the cooking so bad?"

"No, the cooking and the food are excellent," Wolton answered. "Gurdjieff sometimes prepared the meals himself and he is a good cook."

"Then, where does the difficulty lie?"

"Well, you see there is an enormous amount to be eaten. There is also a great deal to drink and Gurdjieff is always complaining that people who come to Paris from *rationed* countries, like England, have lost the capacity to eat and to drink. You, K., will find the drinking particularly difficult for you are rather abstemious, aren't you?"

"He doesn't take anything at all," replied my wife.

"That won't carry any weight with Gurdjieff", said Aubrey. "He's Russian and vodka is a Russian's national drink. The only choice you will have will be a choice between red or white vodka. Or armagnac if you prefer it."

"Pretty grim," I remarked in a low voice. "I suppose its necessary?"

"It is essential," replied Aubrey firmly. "You see there is a good reason for guests having to drink, quite apart from the fact that drinking healths plays an important role in Russian hospitality. A great many people are passing through Gurdjieff's hands at the flat, and if they've had a drink or two they are much more 'open', and I mean by this that Gurdjieff is able to *see* them much more readily after they have had a drink or two. There is a great deal of truth in that old saying of the Arabs: 'Wine makes a man more so.' Alcohol uncovers a man so that he is much more readily perceived by those who are observing him."

"What are Gurdjieff's rules about drinking?" I asked.

"A number of different toasts are drunk during the course of the meal, and I believe that Gurdjieff's rule is that one glass of vodka or of brandy should last for three toasts. After you have drunk these your glass has to be filled up again. The women are let off with six toasts to every glass of vodka or brandy."

"Pretty hard going," I said. "But why are there so many toasts? Whose healths are we drinking?"

"I don't suppose that either of you know much yet about different human types?" Aubrey said, looking at us and raising his eyebrows.

We shook our heads and he continued.

"Well, there is a whole science of types, and it appears to be an exceediingly ancient science too. Gurdjieff declares that it was studied in the ancient city of Babylon. We drink to the different types of men—there are supposed to be about twenty-three of them. Each person will be asked also to select the type to which he himself belongs."

"Suppose he doesn't know?"

"Oh, he just chooses the one that seems to suit him best. Having done this he informs the Director of Ceremonies about the type of idiot to which he believes himself to belong."

"Idiot? Did you say idiot?"

"Yes 'idiot', but in Gurdjieff's flat we are using the Greek word '*idios*' in its original sense, and not in its acquired meaning. The Greek word '*idios*' really signifies 'one's own' and, in this case, it means 'one's own type'. But it's about time that we settled up with the waiter for we are due back now at the hotel. We go on to Gurdjieff's flat at 12 o'clock."

Six or seven followers of Ouspensky's were awaiting our return in the hall of the Belfast hotel, and, the party now being complete, we all proceeded down the Avenue Carnot in the direction of Gurdjieff's flat in the Rue des Colonels Rénards. He lived on the first floor of a typical Parisian block of flats and on our arrival there Aubrey knocked with his hand on a door. It was opened almost immediately by an attractive young girl of about seventeen. Somehow it seemed to me to be appropriate that we should be gaining access to Gurdjieff's residence by knocking on a door rather than by ringing a bell. A knock is a much more 'personal' sign than pressing a button or pulling a wire, and this 'personal' touch was now being accentuated by the opener of the door. Lise, for that was the young girl's name, smiled at us and she seemed to know many of the people present. We were admitted into a tiny hall which was crowded with a number of people who had arrived there shortly before us. Then Lise quietly disappeared

for a moment to return almost immediately with a key in her hand. With this she unlocked the door of a room leading directly on to the hall, and we entered it. What a strange, haphazard kind of room it was. The unusual and odd mixture of furniture, the strange collection of pictures, and the haphazard arrangement of everything in the room gave it the appearance of a 'junk' shop rather than of a private apartment. I looked around me but it was impossible for me to infer from what I saw there anything about the character of the owner of the flat. On the left side of the tiny hall a passage led to other rooms and from this direction now came noises, as though someone were moving about pots and pans in a kitchen. Over the whole flat there hung an odour that was neither French nor English, an aroma which conjured up in my mind memories of some Eastern bazaar. I felt that I had been transported back to Ceylon again and then I suddenly realized the explanation of this. The flat was pervaded with the smell of spices.

After entering and inspecting the room we sat down either on chairs or else on one of the many small wooden stools to be found there. The people who had arrived earlier were already perched on these stools and, to me, they looked like a number of performing seals awaiting the arrival of their trainer. The performance would then begin. I balanced myself, as securely as possible on the top of a stool, and then I looked around me. To the left of me there stood a large glass cabinet whose shelves were well stocked with china ornaments, of value no doubt, but a little too ornate to please me. What attracted me more than the china ornaments, within the cabinet, was a huddle of dolls on top of it, dressed in the peasant costumes of the various nations of Europe. The opposite corner of the room was entirely occupied by a very large structure of mirrors and small gilt platforms on which rested a large number of tiny figures. This was a piece of furniture which a child would have adored for its mirror platforms were crowded with gay little figures. There were men and women driving along in horse-drawn sledges; there were mounted soldiers, galloping with drawn swords; there were Arabian sheiks, Nubian camels and many other figures in addition to the dancing girls. What a fascinating crowd of people they were, and, as I looked at them,

I was continually discovering some new and interesting person. At that particular time of day it was difficult to see them all for their splendid world of gilt and colour was a long way from the window and it was shrouded in semi-darkness. But it was obvious to me that when a certain electric switch was turned on the whole structure would sparkle with dozens and dozens of tiny lamps. I was unable to complete my examination of this potentially glittering world of mirrors and gilt because Bennett had now entered the room and he was carrying in his hand what I gathered to be a chapter of Gurdjieff's first book. It was obvious that there was to be a reading from *All and Everything*. Bennett seated himself on a chair, turned on a pedestal lamp and began to read.

In the course of the reading the door leading into the hall was occasionally opened to admit a late arrival but, an hour after the reading had started, something of very much greater importance happened. My attention had been frequently straying from the reading to the door, but now, on this occasion, it remained fixed on the door. It had opened a little and somebody was inspecting us from the hall. Who was looking at us? Then very quietly and unobstrusively Mr. Gurdjieff entered the room and seated himself in the only vacant chair. It could not possibly be anyone other than Gurdjieff for I had seen photographs of him previously. He was a little shorter than I had expected him to be but otherwise he was much as I had pictured him, after having seen the photographs. No, I had overdone in my mind one feature of Gurdjieff—'the dark piercing eyes' on which Maurice Nicoll had laid such stress. At that moment I saw mirth and friendliness rather than a piercing quality in the eyes surveying us.

The reading continued for about half an hour but my mind had abandoned Beelzebub and his wanderings and it was concerned only with a man with a striking head and a sweeping moustache, a man who was sitting only a few yards away from me. So this was Gurdjieff, the man who in his youth had abandoned his home and had disappeared, with a group of chosen companions, into the wilds of Central Asia for twelve years, in search of the truth. And what was of even greater importance to us all was the fact that he and his fellow searchers had actually found

what they were looking for, and they had brought back with them knowledge of the greatest value not only to themselves but to us. I looked at the figure in the chair as readers of Eastern tales might have gazed at Haroun al Raschid, had that romantic personage suddenly appeared before them. What wonderful things Gurdjieff would have been able to tell me if I had been allowed to interrupt the reading of Beelzebub and to put to him the questions I wanted to put to him about his travels.

Gurdjieff himself eventually interrupted the reading, and he spoke to us but not in the way I had pictured him as speaking. "Le Patron," he said, passing his hand lightly over a slightly protruding abdomen, "is demanding more attention, et le patron est une personne très importante. He has to be treated with the greatest respect and he is asking now to be fed. Therefore I invite you all to lunch." Rising from his chair, without, adding any more words, Gurdjieff noiselessly left the room.

The tiny hall of the flat was now again chock-a-block with people so that it was even more difficult than before to move about in it. But hearing my name called, I forced a passage through the crowd for my wife and myself. It was Madame de Salzmann who had called us and she was indicating to all of us where to sit. Gurdjieff was already in his customary place, seated cross-legged on a small divan at the head of the table. Madame de Salzmann indicated to me that I was to sit facing him across the table. I placed myself a little apologetically on the chair which she had pointed to. More and more people were squeezing their way into the dining room, and those who could find no seat at the main table were accommodated at small subsidiary tables placed around the periphery of the room. A few less fortunate people stood leaning with their backs propped up against the walls of the dining-room and it was astonishing that so many people could manage to find accommodation in so small a space. When everybody, with or without chairs, had been wedged into his or her place, a signal was given and a living overhead delivery-belt was formed which stretched from the kitchen to the dining-room. By means of it the luncheon dishes and the plates were transported expeditiously by an overhead route, from the kitchen to the dining table.

Gurdjieff removed from his head his 'kalmak' with the innate dignity of a monarch divesting himself of his crown, and this Eastern head-piece now rested on the divan beside him. He then selected a large bowl standing on the table and began to prepare a dish of tasty morsels for his guests. Into the bowl went pieces of chopped cucumber, pickles, red peppers, onions, fragments of bread and a number of unknown contributions which had been extracted from unlabelled bottles and bowls. Gurdjieff finished his strange concoction by adding to it a liberal supply of sour cream. The mixture was then stirred and tasted, from time to time, in the manner in which the ancient apothecaries must have prepared and have tasted their 'elixirs of life'. This was not the type of dish to which I personally was very attracted or accustomed, because I had an instinctive liking for the simpler and more conventional forms of food. I foresaw, therefore, that I should have considerable difficulty in swallowing Gurdjieff's mixture but it would not be so difficult a gustatory feat as swallowing the vodka with which I was supposed to 'wash it down'. I accepted my portion of the strange concoction with as good a grace as I could manage to summon up for the occasion.

The moment had come to begin eating and the Master of Ceremonies sitting on Gurdjieff's left, was looking around and assuring himself that every glass was charged, either with vodka or with armagnac. I started by separating off certain strange morsels from the mixture which had been placed in front of me and I was gratified to find that the sour cream in which they were immersed exercised an emollient action on the more corrosive of the dish's ingredients. I also found comfort in the clinical fact that fats are capable of absorbing a certain amount of alcohol. This would protect the mucus membrane of my stomach from the irritating action of the vodka.

What an unusual man Gurdjieff was. The removal of his 'kalmak' revealed the full splendour of his high domed, clean-shaven head. The next characteristic of Gurdjieff's head that I noted was that although he claimed to be over eighty years of age, his face was almost completely devoid of wrinkles. It was a serene and smooth face, and it was a face charged also with a

great deal of energy and intelligence. In many ways it reminded me of the heads of the Lohan figures, which had made so deep an impression on me when I had visited the Chinese exhibition in London, shortly before the outbreak of the war. Then I looked at Gurdjieff's hands and I noted that in spite of his age his fingers never dithered or fumbled in their movements. I had an excellent opportunity for studying his hands for they were continuously engaged in preparing 'bon bouches' for his guests. At that moment Gurdjieff was paring an apple and I noted that he stripped the fruit of its covering with the assurance and skill of a surgeon engaged on some delicate plastic operation. He knew exactly what had to be done and he did it, without doubt or hesitation. He had an excellent control over his body and its movements.

My close study of the man to whom I owed so much, and to whom I was to owe even more, was interrupted by his eyes turning in my direction. He asked me whether it were true or not that I was a doctor. On hearing that this was correct he told me that he had always taken a great interest in medicine, and that he had actually acted as a doctor in times of emergency, such as when cholera had become epidemic in Persia, and when plague had broken out in China.

"But why," he enquired, "do you not eat more? Do you not like the dish?"

"No, it's not that," I started to answer. "It is due to the fact that having only just arrived from England. . . . "

"Ah yes. You are from England, and the English have got habituated to war rations. They are no longer able to eat anything at all. In England people continue to starve and when they come to Paris they pick here, and they pick there like birds, but they never really eat heartily." Gurdjieff then enacted a sparrow picking up crumbs. "It is sad, but after a few days treatment in Rue des Colonels Rénards, these poor starved people from England rapidly recover." Having delivered himself of this favourable prognosis, Gurdjieff smiled and, picking up a fragment of smoked sturgeon, he handed it to me. Then turning his head away, he said, "Now, Monsieur le Directeur, the next toast, s'il vous plâit."

Gurdjieff was liable to throw as many languages into a phrase as he would throw fragments of food into a dish. He could speak with equal ease in the popular idioms of France, England, Russian and Italy. He spoke none of these languages really well, but he spoke all of them with ease, and he sprinkled them with an abundance of metaphors. His partiality for metaphor became evident to me on this first day of meeting him for he now gave vent to the following observation. "If you eat what I have given you and then you drink some of that good red vodka, for you it will be roses, roses all the way. But if you take one without taking the other, then it will not be roses but only thorns."

The vodka was terribly powerful and soon my inner life and the outer room were engaged in unpleasant movements. I was forced to remind myself from time to time of *where* I was, and of *what* I was doing. I kept telling myself that I was now in Paris, not very far from the Arc de Triomphe, and that I was lunching with Gurdjieff, the man about whom Maurice Nicoll had spoke to me more than twenty years ago. Yes, it was Gurdjieff and not the Caliph Haroun al Raschid who was sitting here opposite me. We were now drinking to a number of different kinds of 'idiots', square 'idiots', round 'idiots', zig-zag 'idiots' and finally quite 'ordinary idiots', like myself. For it was with the ordinary brand of 'idiots' that I had modestly elected to align myself. My sensations and my thoughts at that moment were very puzzling and they took me right back to my childhood when, whilst going to sleep in my cot, certain objects in the nursery, such as the night-light by my bed, would get bigger and bigger, and then smaller and smaller. The only difference was that *here* I was not allowed to go to sleep, but had to stay awake and to cling on to the one remaining point of steadiness which remained within me. Everything was swaying backwards and forwards. Yes, I was lunching with Gurdjieff near to the Arc de Triomphe. He was a wonderful man and very friendly, but I wished that he would stop advancing and retreating from me as the night-light in the nursery used to advance and retreat when I peered at it through a haze of increasing drowsiness. But now I wasn't in the nursery or even drowsy. I was lunching with Gurdjieff in Paris and Mary was sitting there

quite near me, apparently unperturbed by all this swaying, this eating of strange things and this drinking of fire-water.

At long last the toasts came to an end and coffee cups and packets of cigarettes appeared on the table. I felt much as a shipwrecked sailor must feel when, after being buffetted about in a turbulent sea and all but drowned, he suddenly discovers that he is still alive and within sight of land. It was all over now, and there was no need for me any longer to eat or to drink what I did not want to eat or drink. Suddenly I realized that Gurdjieff was dangling before my eyes something I really did like, a great blob of Turkish Delight. Having presented it to me, Gurdjieff turned to the assembled company and announced "I invite you all to sup with me again tonight. The reading will start at half past nine. Now I advise you all to lie down for a little, first resting on the left side and then on the right." After these final words of medical advice, the luncheon party rose to its feet and trickled, by ones and twos, out of the room.

In the Rue des Colonel Rénards, outside the flat, the sun was shining and the Parisians were going about their business, and about their pleasures, with brisk movements, as though nothing at all strange had been happening in the flat I had just left. Like an old owl confused with the sunshine in which he has been caught in the course of finding his way back into the dark corner that is his home, I blinked my eyes and glanced at my watch. It was not early morning, as I had expected it to be, but early afternoon and, to be more exact, it was half-past three. I should be well advised to take Gurdjieff's advice and to have a spell or rest in the Belfast Hotel, before returning for another gastronomic session in Gurdjieff's flat.

"What did you think of it all?" I asked my wife when we had reached our room and had lain down on our beds, minus our shoes.

"It would take too long to tell you," she answered. "The furnishing of that room, the pictures, the . . . "

"No, that's of no importance," I said. "What I want you to tell me is what you thought of *him*".

There was a very long pause. "Too difficult—no words? I don't

know yet how to describe such a concentration of force in one man. It's impossible."

"I agree," I answered. "But behind all that strength, and behind what appears to be ruthlessness, I saw something else. If need be, he could probably be brutal and ruthless, but only in the way that a surgeon is ruthless and brutal when he has the job of removing a malignant growth. Behind all that decision, and all that strength, I caught a glimpse of a man with an immense compassion for all mankind. There is a gentleness, patience and compassion there, as well as a great strength. There is also plenty of mirth and laughter as well as determination and decision. But the word which came to my mind first and which remained with me all the time that I was with him, was the word 'compassion'. He made me think of the Buddha as he sat cross-legged on that divan and, for me, Buddha is a wise teacher, very richly endowed with compassion."

"I think you are probably right," my wife answered. "But he is a man who has to be treated with great care. Sitting near him is like sitting near to a Power House. He radiates strength and I think he could do almost anything with one that he wanted to do."

"Yes, he has immense power. What else would you say about him?"

"A lot, but I'm not going to talk about him any more now. We've got to be back again in the flat at half-past nine, and we ought to rest, and specially you. I'm sure that you found all that eating and drinking rather hard going. So sleep now that you have the chance to sleep." It was good advice and I did my best to follow it.

XII

GURDJIEFF AS A TEACHER

WE HAD BEEN ASSURED BY PEOPLE, on our arrival in Paris, that although life at Gurdjieff's flat would seem strange to us at first, we should soon get accustomed to it. I cannot say that the feeling of the unusualness of my surroundings in Gurdjieff's flat, ever disappeared for *me*. The furnishings, the pictures, the ornaments of the flat, the drawn curtains and the eating of an enormous lunch at two o'clock, and of a nightmare supper at midnight, retained their singularity for me until the end of my visit. I never became accustomed to them. But I was convinced by now that Gurdjieff did everything for a definite purpose. I felt, therefore, that his heavy lunches and dinners were not designed merely for the enjoyment of eating and drinking. They were used for the purpose of jolting us all out of our set routines, and I noticed that the abrupt change in our manner of living was already having a beneficial effect on those of us who had come to Paris from London. We English followers of Ouspensky had become a little grim and rigid in our demeanour, and we were in danger of acquiring what I regarded as being 'chapel-going expressions'. In my opinion we had been subjected, for too long a period, to Ouspensky's rules and regulations, and we were in need for a loosening-up process. No one was better equipped for administering this corrective treatment than Gurdjieff, and, as the days passed, I noted with satisfaction that the treatment we were

receiving in the Rue des Colonels Rénard was beginning to have a beneficial effect on us members of the Ouspensky group. Our faces were becoming more relaxed, our speech less calculated, and our behaviour more friendly and spontaneous. Gurdjieff had said, more than once, that it was necessary for everybody to know when to be serious and when to laugh. He declared that a sleeping man was singularly lacking in this knowledge, and that he was often solemn when it was an occasion for gaiety and laughter, and frivolous when it would have been much better for him to have been more serious. In other words, a sleeping man had the greatest difficulty in recognizing the true significance of the various events which formed the pattern of his life. He was unable to see their real meaning.

There was yet another change which Gurdjieff was bringing about in the Ouspensky contingent. As has already been stressed, Ouspensky was a strict disciplinarian and he had issued very precise instructions as to how everything should be done. Very little was ever left to a pupil's initiative and judgement. In the past, I had done my best to carry out Ouspensky's orders but I never attempted to do more than was expected of me. In other words I behaved much as a new recruit behaves after he has joined the Army. But Gurdjieff was developing in us all a sense of responsibility, and particularly a sense of responsibility for what can be called 'the work' as a whole. We were beginning to take part in what Ouspensky had called the third line of work, that is to say, we were beginning to wonder what would be beneficial not only for ourselves as individuals, but also for the satisfactory teaching of Gurdjieff's ideas. As a result of all this I was experiencing an unaccustomed sense of inner freedom and at the same time an increasing sense of my own responsibilities. This sense of individual responsibility became particularly strong on those occasions when I was summoned by Gurdjieff to a private talk in his own headquarters in the flat. This was neither his bedroom, nor a private sitting-room. It was the storeroom in which he kept all the flat's supplies. This constituted the very heart of the establishment and I am still able to visualize its appearance, when I close my eyes and picture it to myself. I see tiers and tiers and

tiers of wooden shelves rising from floor level up to the very ceiling. These shelves groan under the weight of groceries of every kind, and of innumerable tins, packets, boxes and bottles. Everything is there that could possibly be needed in the form of supplies for his very hospitable table. I see boxes of Turkish Delight, bundles of raisins, herbs, onions and dried fruit, bags of flour and sugar, and everything in the way of flavouring agents that a much-travelled cook could desire.

I had several private conversations with Gurdjieff in his 'Holy of Holies'. This explains why my surroundings in these talks still remain vivid in my memory, even although many years have now passed since they took place. Gurdjieff usually sat by the side of a small square table placed precariously near to a veritable rampart of bottles. Madame de Salzmann was often present for the purpose of translating anything which Gurdjieff found difficult to say in English. Above Gurdjieff's left ear, and almost biting it, dangled from a nail, a big chocolate-fish wrapped up in silver paper. Lise had usually placed on the table a coffee-pot with three cups and saucers. In my imagination I see Gurdjieff trying to fit the end of a cigarette into a holder which appears to be a little too narrow to accommodate it. We are about to take coffee together, and Gurdjieff starts by instructing me in the correct technique for drinking coffee. For some reason, which I have never been able to discover, a lump of sugar has to be popped into the mouth just before drinking the coffee, and not placed, as is more customary, in the coffee cup itself. Why this should be the correct procedure in coffee drinking I was never able to understand.

After taking our coffee Gurdjieff would talk to me about some exercise that I had to do, such as an exercise for 'sensing' various parts of the body. Or it might be a method by which I should become more aware of the energy which I was continually throwing away. He suggested that I should draw an imaginary circle around myself, beyond which my attention and my energies should never be allowed to stray, so long as I was engaged in doing this exercise. Or sometimes, when I was alone with him, he would explain to me something that he had said previously but which I had not yet understood. And, having elucidated the

difficulty, he would often add, "This is for you and for you only. You must not talk about it to other people."

At such times I had the feeling that I was receiving knowledge, not only from Mr. Gurdjieff, but also from a long line of teachers stretching far back into the past, teachers who had always preceded what they had to say with the preliminary caution, "This is for you only, and not at present for anybody else." Plato had said something very like that to his pupils, but probably he had said it whilst they were walking together in the Academy Gardens, and not whilst sitting in the Academy store-cupboard.

As it is not for those to speak of the beauties of the natural world who have never seen them, or known them—men born blind for instance—so must those be silent about the beauty of noble conduct and knowledge who have never cared for such things.

Plotinus had received this preliminary caution from Ammonius Saccus and my links with Plotinus at those moments in the storeroom were much closer than were my links with Plato. Whenever I looked at Gurdjieff I was always reminded of Ammonius Saccus, the teacher of Plotinus. To my way of thinking these two great men, Gurdjieff and Ammonius Saccus, had a great deal in common. The knowledge imparted by both of them was of Eastern origin and neither Ammonius Saccus nor Gurdjieff were scholars in the narrower sense of that word. Ammonius Saccus earned his livelihood as an ordinary porter, and the word 'Saccus' was derived from the large bag in which porters carried about their clients' luggage. Gurdjieff was a better educated man than Ammonius Saccus probably was, but he was not a *savant*. He had earned his livelihood previously in many different ways, including the buying and selling of carpets. Yet from Ammonius Saccus and from Gurdjieff came knowledge which was not to be found in books, knowledge which was beyond the price of rubies, knowledge which it would some day be my duty to pass on, as Plotinus had passed on the knowledge which he had received from Ammonius Saccus. Plotinus has left a letter in which he tries to describe the state of consciousness and of being in which knowledge is *directly* apprehended, so that the 'knower' becomes one with the knowledge. He wrote:

It is a state in which you are your finite 'self' no longer—in which the Divine Essence is communicated to you. It is the liberation of your mind from its finite anxieties. *Like* can only apprehend *like*; when you thus cease to be finite you become one with the Infinite. In the reduction of your soul to its simplest self, its Divine Essence, you realize this union—this Identity.

Many years had to pass before I fully understood the import of the message which Plotinus has passed on to us in this letter. But even in that store-cupboard I was aware of the several links which bound me to that great expounder of the philosophy of Neo-Platonism. Plotinus seemed to be sometimes present in that tiny room with me, so that, for a moment or two, it was not Gurdjieff but Plotinus, and his teacher Ammonius Saccus who were speaking to me.

A few days after my arrival in Paris the nature of the general readings which took place at the flat changed. Instead of handing to the reader the typescript of one of the chapters taken from *Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson* Gurdjieff supplied him with extracts from another book he was writing at that time, namely the book from his second series of writings entitled *Meetings with Remarkable Men*. Who were the remarkable men whose lives have been recorded in Gurdjieff's second book? To answer this question a little more has to be known about Gurdjieff's childhood and about his earlier years. There are reasons for believing that Gurdjieff was not quite as old as he had made himself out to be. Evidence points to his having been born in Alexandropol, near the Persian frontier of Russia, on January 1st, 1872. He came of Ionian-Greek stock and his family emigrated to the Southern Caucasus during the troubled year in which Turkish armies overran and conquered the Byzantine Empire. Consequently it was in the Caucasian gateway to Asia that the young Gurdjieff spent an important part of his boyhood. His surroundings exerted a very powerful influence over him. Strange pastoral people, with their flocks, wandered over the broad grazing grounds of the Caucasus, and no community could have been more curious to a thoughtful and imaginative youth than the Yezidis, or Devil-Worshippers. This tribe had a number of incomprehensible

customs and it subscribed to laws which were entirely different from those governing the behaviour of other neighbouring tribes. The Yezides dabbled in magic and, according to Gurdjieff it was not an uncommon sight to see a Yezidi boy completely incapable of escaping from a 'magical circle' that someone had drawn around him. Why was a boy so helpless in these circumstances? There was much to puzzle a mind as intelligent and as inquisitive as that of the young Gurdjieff.

Gurdjieff tells us a great deal about his father, for whom he had a very great respect. His father had once been fairly well off and had owned flocks of sheep, and herds of cattle. But he had lost most of his possessions through the outbreak of a serious cattle epidemic and, because of these losses, he was compelled to adopt a new mode of obtaining a livelihood. He became a carpenter. The older Gurdjieff would appear to have been an extremely intelligent man, for as well as being a carpenter he had adopted a profession of 'bard'. He attended village gatherings at which he recited the old legends and sagas of the country in which he was now living, to listeners who had specially met together in order to hear these ancient stories. Because the elder Gurdjieff was interested in religions and philosophies, as well as in local legends, he counted amongst his friends men who had received a much better education than he had himself, and these friends would sometimes drop in at his carpenter's workshop in the evenings. The young Gurdjieff would listen to their conversation with his father, and as these talks often continued far into the night, they had a great effect on the young Gurdjieff. Indeed it is no exaggeration to say that they altered the whole subsequent course of his career. This was because they aroused his interest in subjects about which other young men knew nothing at all. The legends that his father recited at village gatherings also had a strong influence on the young Gurdjieff. He must often have wondered about the source of his father's knowledge. At any rate it is certain that as a young man Gurdjieff had reached the opinion that there was knowledge of a higher nature to be found, if he could only manage to find it.

That the young Gurdjieff was no ordinary boy is indicated by

the fact that the Dean of the local Cathedral at Kars, the Russian military outpost near which the Gurdjieff family was at that time living, took a great interest in him. Dean Borsch told Gurdjieff's father that it would be a great mistake to allow so intelligent a boy as his son to be sent to the ordinary State schools, and he said that he would make himself responsible for his education. This he did. He arranged that the young Gurdjieff should be taught privately, not only by himself, but by a number of his friends and juniors in the Church.

Gurdjieff greatly profited by these special arrangements for his education. He displayed a special liking for science, an interest which he retained the whole of his life. But it was difficult to find any subject in which Gurdjieff was *not* interested, and there was a danger that his energies might be dispersed over too wide a field of study. His father's own views about education were such as to increase this risk of his son's studying too many subjects, for amongst his father's sayings was the following one: 'The great thing in education is not to accumulate a great store of facts, but to learn how to learn.' In order to assist his son to discover for himself the art of acquiring knowledge, the older Gurdjieff would set his son a certain task to perform and then, as soon as he had found the best method of doing it, he would stop him and give him an entirely different task to do. By such means as these the young Gurdjieff quickly acquired a large number of accomplishments and, above all, he gained much knowledge of the art of learning.

The overall idea that both the Dean and Gurdjieff's father had in their minds was that eventually the young Gurdjieff should devote himself entirely to science and theology, and that he should afterwards qualify both as a doctor and as a priest. In the opinion of the Dean it was impossible to practise either of these two professions without at the same time practising the other. There was, of course, some justification for the Dean's arriving at this conclusion. Illnesses of the mind and of the body are so closely linked that it is often impossible to separate them. The close association of mind and body and of body with the mind is an important part of Gurdjieff's teaching.

Who were the remarkable men of whom Gurdjieff was writing in his second book *Meetings with Remarkable Men*? This question has to some extent been answered in the translator's note to Gurdjieff's second book published in 1963. This note starts by pointing out that Gurdjieff never was, and never could be a writer in the ordinary sense of that word. His function was not so much that of an author as that of a *Master*. The translator is using the word 'Master' here in the Asiatic, and older European sense, in which that word was once employed. The true function of a Master is not merely to formulate ideas and to impart doctrines to his pupil, but to represent, *in his own person*, the doctrines of which he is the teacher. A Master should be a living model of the knowledge he is passing on to his disciples. The main tenet of the Gurdjieff teaching is that a man can become other than he is. He is asleep, but by the adoption of certain methods and by very persistent struggles he can awake, in varying degrees, from this sleep. Gurdjieff not only taught these methods but by his actual presence he helped his pupil to struggle towards what he himself had accomplished in a far greater degree than the pupils were ever likely to reach. There is nothing theoretical in Gurdjieff's psychological teaching. His ideas are intensely practical, and they are practical from the very start. To quote the translator's own words:

> From the moment of Gurdjieff's return from the East he worked unremittingly to build up around himself a circle of men resolved to share with him a life directed entirely towards the development of consciousness. He unfolded his ideas, enlivened and sustained their search, and led them to the conviction that in order to be complete, their experience must bear simultaneously on all the aspects of the human being.

The more I saw of Gurdjieff, the more convinced I became of my teacher's uniqueness. I had met famous and unusual men before, but I had never come across anybody who resembled him. He possessed qualities that I had never seen before. Insight, knowledge, control and 'being' are the words that flow into my mind when I begin to think what those qualities actually were. Coming into direct contact with Gurdjieff was always rather a

test. One felt extremely vulnerable. The features of one's personality and all one's weaknesses would be obvious to him. Gurdjieff would see their false character and, in all likelihood, he would expose their worthlessness to the gaze of other people. It would be utterly useless, therefore, to resort to any form of pretence whilst talking to Gurdjieff. Of his wide range of knowledge, and particularly of his knowledge of things which could not be found in books there could be no doubt. And the knowledge which he had given us was knowledge of an entirely practical nature, that is to say, it was knowledge which had not to be blindly accepted but which had to be submitted to a practical test.

Gurdjieff's ability to control himself and to act *consciously* was also apparent to me. One evening a young man who had arranged to be present at the evening meal put in an appearance when it was nearly over, thereby throwing extra work on the already over-burdened kitchen staff. There are occasions when accidents of this kind cannot be avoided, but clearly this was a deliberate action on the part of a presumptious and self-satisfied young man, who had to be taken to task. Gurdjieff, who had been talking to me, turned on him suddenly, vented his anger on him, finished abruptly and then resumed his conversation with me at the exact place at which it had been interrupted. Anger had been required for the treatment of this particular young man, and it had been consciously produced. It had been immediately put on one side after it had had the required effect on the young man. The changes in Gurdjieff, from calm to anger and from anger back again to calm, were abrupt and deliberate. No vestige of his previous angry state was left behind when Gurdjieff resumed his interrupted conversation with the person to whom he had previously been talking.

It was Gurdjieff's *being* rather than his knowledge which made the greatest impression on me. The word 'being' is a difficult word to define. It is the quality in a 'man' which chiefly distinguishes him from a *man-machine*. It is also the quality which accompanies the change from the waking-sleep of an ordinary man to the level of consciousness of a man who is 'present to himself'. 'Being' is a quality of which other people usually become aware when it is present in a man, but which they usually find it impossible to put

into words. We all emit different forms of energy into space, and although I was never told this by Mr. Gurdjieff himself, I am disposed to think that the energies which are radiated by a *conscious* man differ from those which emanate from a man in a lower state of consciousness. In all probability this is the explanation of my wife's remark after her first encounter with Gurdjieff: "To sit near him is like sitting near a power-house containing dynamos." A sense of collected power seems to radiate from a more highly developed type of man.

But again a question arises as to what the term 'a more highly developed man' really means. This question is much more easily answered than the previous one about *being*. According to the philosophy of 'the system' life is not an end in itself but is only a means towards an end. As explained in the first chapter of this book man is potentially a 'self-evolving' being, but he has to struggle hard with his ordinary nature if he is going to evolve any further, and it is the function of the 'work' to teach him *how* to struggle. The first requirement is that a man should *see* himself as he really is. He will obtain these glimpses of himself best by getting deeper into himself and by watching from the silent-depths what is happening on the noisier and more superficial layers of himself. He will have discovered by this time that the level of his consciousness is continually changing and that he spends most of the day on a level for which Gurdjieff's term 'waking-sleep' is appropriate. Another observation, which is closely related to this one, is the observation that the great majority of man's actions are performed quite mechanically and without his being aware of what he is doing. Man's first task is therefore to *know* himself as he really *is*. His second task is to awaken from his sleep more and more frequently, for it is only when the level of his consciousness has risen a little that he will be able to exert a modicum of control over himself.

Whilst expounding to us his views on man's possible development, Gurdjieff often had recourse to the ancient parable which likens a man to a chariot drawn by a horse, and controlled by a driver. In this parable the chariot represents man's body, the horse, his emotions, and the driver, his mind. Gurdjieff had his

own version of this ancient parable and he likened man's body to an old-fashioned *fiacre* or cab. He said that the mind of the ordinary man, in its usual state of waking-sleep, resembled an irresponsible and dissolute cab-driver who spent most of his time in the local public-house, or in a neighbouring kitchen with a friendly cook. As a result of the cab driver's dissipation and indolence the cab and the cab-horse were sadly neglected. Even when the cab-driver was in his proper place, sitting on the box, he (representing, as he does, man's mind) had very little control over the horse (the emotions) because the intellectual and emotional centres speak entirely different languages. They fail, therefore, to understand one another, so that it is entirely useless for the mind to exclaim as it sometimes does: "I will not react to this emotion in my usual manner. I will not become negative." This will have no result at all. I can recall Gurdjieff's saying to me: "Yes, driver he know, horse he not know. Horse he not understand what driver has said". In other words there is no satisfactory intercommunication between the driver and the horse, and in order to establish some connection between the intellectual centre and the emotional centre it is necessary for a man to become more conscious than he is. This in turn demands that he should have acquired much more control over his attention. Then, and then only, will there by any connecting reins between the driver and his horse.

As Gurdjieff has said, it is only by means of parables, that is to say by a process of creative imagination, that it is possible to express ideas of an emotional or spiritual nature; for the emotional centre (the horse) only understands the language of visual images. It was for this reason that Gurdjieff made such constant use of symbols and of parables in his teaching.

When I recall life in Gurdjieff's flat, a third type of picture forms itself in my mind, in addition to the pictures of the drinking of healths at the supper table and talks with Gurdjieff in his storeroom. The third series of pictures are those of Gurdjieff playing music. When supper was over and however late it might be, we were all invited to retire into another room and to seat ourselves on the floor or on stools in order to listen to Gurdjieff playing

music. He would take his accordion-piano on to his knee and he would then play to us. His left hand crept behind his instrument in order to reach and to work the bellows, whilst his right hand rested lightly on the keyboard. Then there came haunting music in minor chords and in sequences of single notes. It was music which saddened one, and at the same time stirred one to the depths. Gurdjieff never mentioned to us the source of his music but he told Margaret Anderson that some of it was incredibly old. The following snatch of conversation has been taken from Margaret Anderson's book *The Unknowable Gurdjieff.*

"What happened to me?" I said, "When I came into this room I was happy. And then that music—and now I am happy again." "I play objective music to make cry," Gurdjieff said. "There are many kinds of such music—some to make laugh and to hate. This is the beginning of music—sacred music, two or three thousand years old. Your church music comes from such, but they don't realize. They have forgotten. This is Temple music—very ancient."

I accept this statement of Gurdjieff's, for much of the music he played possessed the plaintive and the prayer-like quality of Church music. Although Gurdjieff never actually claimed this, some of it might well have been heard in the ancient Temple in Jerusalem. Other pieces had a pastoral quality and I could easily imagine them being piped by shepherds or herd-boys watching their flocks. I agree with Margaret Anderson that Gurdjieff's music was music of a strangely moving character. It was entirely devoid of all passion and violence. Gurdjieff once asked me what I thought of it, but, at such short notice, I was unable to find words with which to describe my feelings. All that I was able to say was that I preferred this piece to that piece and a poor and inadequate answer I felt this to be.

XIII

SPECIAL MOVEMENTS AND DANCES

GURDJIEFF AND HIS FELLOW SEARCHERS for the truth brought back from their travels in Asia three different, but closely related entities. The first was a system of philosophical, psychological and religious ideas; the second, a number of difficult exercises and sacred dances, and the third, the music played as an accompaniment to these movements and sacred dances. I have mentioned the movements and the temple dances in a previous chapter in which I stated that, instead of exhausting me after a hard day's work, the movements had an invigorating effect on me. I came back to London in so satisfactory a state that I would say to myself "Why should I go to bed when I am much more awake than I usually am? Why should I not enjoy this stirring in my sleep of life? Why waste it by deliberately plunging into dreams?"

I was puzzled by what had happened to me and, at the time I gave it a lot of thought. What was the nature of the magic residing in Gurdjieff's complicated and difficult movements and sacred dances? Why were they of such service to us in what we called 'the work' and how did they assist us in the efforts we were making to raise the general level of our consciousness? These were questions I postponed for discussion in a later chapter. I shall discuss them now and I shall start by giving my own personal experience of these exercises and movements, and particularly of the movements known as the six obligatory movements. They are called 'obligatory' because a pupil has to become proficient in

them before he is allowed to take part in the more complicated temple dances. However, in the following discussion of the role played by the dances and the movements in Gurdjieff's technique I shall deal with these dances and movements, as a whole.

The 'movements' as they are usually called were performed every day in the study house at Gurdjieff's Institute for the harmonious development of man, at Fontainebleau. Indeed the study house was built specially for that purpose. In 1923 Gurdjieff took with him to New York a well-trained team of dancers, and he gave there a public demonstration of the dances and the movements. Stanley Nott has given us an account of this demonstration in his book *The Teaching of Gurdjieff*. He tells us that Orage, the editor of the *New Age* at that time, addressed the audience before the performance began. He explained to it that the movements about to be demonstrated were examples of a very ancient art, and that dancing in the East had an entirely different significance from that which it had in the West. It formed part of a very ancient art. The dances about to be shown were still being performed in certain temples in Tibet, Turkestan, Kafiristan and Chitral. These temples had been visited by the seekers of the truth and they had even been allowed to take part in the dancing. As a result of this they had been fully convinced that these ancient movements and dances possessed a very deep religious significance for all who took part in them. It was almost certain that movements and dances of this kind had always been important objects of study in Oriental schools of an esoteric nature. They had a double aim. They conveyed knowledge of a certain nature to the dancer, and they also led to the establishment in him of a more harmonious state of being. Consequently they helped the dancer to acquire a more intense sense of his own body. They provided an excellent method of training a person's attention and it was for all of these reasons that Gurdjieff made extensive use of them in his Fontainebleau Institute.

Where did Gurdjieff and his companions discover these dances and special movements? Nobody really knows. All that Stanley Nott is able to say on this subject is that the first three of the obligatory exercises formed part of the ritual used in the Temple

of Medecine of Sari in Tibet. The last three exercises were still being employed in a certain Eastern esoteric school, known as the school of the seers of Kafiristan. The first of the sacred dances to be performed after the obligatory exercises have been done is called the 'initiation of the priestess' and it is a dance which made a very deep impression on the New York audience. It gave them the feeling that they, themselves, were taking part in a religious ceremony. After the 'initiation of the priestess' there followed a number of dervish dances, which were all performed in the appropriate dervish costumes. The first of these dances was called the 'Ho Yah' dance and it was used by a certain order of monks who were called by outsiders 'They who have renounced', but who were known to the monks themselves as 'Those who tolerate freedom'. This dance was usually followed by the camel-step dance from Afghanistan. Afterwards another dance known as a funeral ceremony dance was likely to be performed. It is said, that this funeral dance formed part of the ritual of the veiled monks of the Lakum order. The performance in New York ended with the dances and movements of the better known order of whirling dervishes.

The women also had their special dances and some of these are said to have been preparatory exercises which were taught to the novices in certain convents. Other dances for women can be called 'occupational dances' for they reproduce the movements made in such feminine occupations as spinning and weaving. According to Stanley Nott the crowning point of the New York demonstration was the performance of the special movements known as the 'big seven'. These exercises are said to have been derived from a religious sect which lived near to Mount Ararat, a sect which was known as the order of the Aisors. The Aisors were formerly attached to a Christian fraternity which later adopted certain Sufi practices. What is of special interest to those who are Gurdjieff's followers is the fact that many of these Aisor movements are based on the ancient symbol know as the Enneagram. This symbol has a very important place in the philosophical system taught by Gurdjieff. It is said that the order of the Essenes, an order which existed centuries before the birth of

Christ, used this ancient symbol of the Enneagram in their services and based some of their sacred rituals and dances on it.

In what way do these dances and movements assist an individual's inner development? They help in many different ways. Man is not a single individual. He is a number of poorly co-ordinated individuals, and the exercises assist him to become better integrated. They also train that all-important faculty in man, his attention. They reveal to dancers how intimate are the links between his different centres, and how a change in one of them brings about a corresponding change in another centre. In other words they assist the pupil to understand much better than he did before his own inner mechanism. And before it is possible to bring about any change in ourselves, it is first necessary to *see* ourselves as we actually are much more clearly.

There is another special exercise which is particularly helpful in revealing to the pupil the working of his moving centre. It is known as the 'stop exercise'. The pupils are first warned that, at any moment, they may hear the word 'stop' uttered, and on hearing it they have to remain frozen, as it were, in the position in which they were caught when the word 'stop' was heard... The pupils are warned beforehand that they may hear the word at a very awkward moment for stopping. The main purpose of this exercise is to help the pupil to observe the movements which he carries out entirely automatically with the result that he has not yet become aware of them. The 'stop exercise' also helps a pupil to become more conscious of his body so that he is able to maintain it in a relaxed state.

Stanley Nott has given us an account of the carrying out of the 'stop exercise' by Gurdjieff's pupils during the public demonstration of dances and movements in New York. He writes:

At that point Gurdjieff came on to the stage and I was able to observe him closely. He was wearing a dark lounge suit and a black 'Trilby' hat; a very powerful man physically, yet as light on his feet as a tiger . . . The pupils, having gathered at one side of the stage, Gurdjieff threw something into the air, and the pupils ran to catch it. He shouted "Stop". As if by magic, the members of the group became frozen into a number of different attitudes, so that they resembled immobile

statues. A minute or two passed. "Davolna," said Gurdjieff, and everyone relaxed and walked off. The exercise was done several times.

One of the questions that I hoped to answer in this chapter is the question why, after taking part in the strenuous movements being done in Lyne Place I returned home to London, not tired, as I had expected, but refreshed? In my opinion this is explained not by one, but by several factors. In the first place, the music played at Lyne had an invigorating effect on me. The stimulating action of the music was noted also by those who worked in Gurdjieff's Fontainebleau Institute. Those living at the Institute found that the amount of work they were able to accomplish in a given time, was greatly increased by the playing of Gurdjieff's music.

There is magic in this music and it still retains its magic for me. When I listen to the music now, and when I watch other people doing the exercises and the dances, in which I took part, many years ago, I at once become more awake. I also come back from afar to take up residence again in my own body. In a trice I am transported in my body to Lyne Place and I feel myself taking part in the movements. I am walking round a large room with other people, and with my arms stretched out horizontally. The time has arrived when the muscles of my arms are beginning to tire. But no one has, as yet, 'given up,' so *I* am not going to be the first person to drop my arms. I see it all again, and I feel it all again, though thirty years have passed since it happened. Why are my memories and why are the sensations connected with these old events so vivid and so alive in me?

They are vivid and alive in me now because, when these old scenes and activities were being imprinted on the rolls of my memory, I was alive and alert. I was not in my usual state of 'waking-sleep'. I was present in my body, and I was physically aware of the fact that I was marching around the room, with my arms fully outstretched. Because of this I become aware of myself and of my body now when these old memories are revived in me again.

There is another strange and striking characteristic of these old memories. It is that there is a flowing together of all of these old

moments of enhanced consciousness so that they do not stand widely apart, as the pillars of a cathedral stand apart. They tend to flow together, on a higher level, in a series of arches, just as the pillars of a cathedral do. In other words they become parts of a single uniform structure existing on a higher level of my being. It is strange how all the ordinary measurements of time and space disappear on those higher levels. On a certain level of consciousness the words *before* and *after* become entirely meaningless. We live in an *eternal now* and we become parts of a *whole* much greater and higher than ourselves. In that vast realm the small 'personal pronouns' become as useless as the measurement of space and time. I am speaking here of the state described in the Upanishads, one of 'consciousness without thought'. It is a state of consciousness in which the *subject* and *object* become one. One knows something by becoming one with it. The sanskrit word for it is *turiya* (literally the fourth, and in this case, the fourth level of consciousness). It is a state of 'enlightenment' in which one sees rather than thinks, for thought is one of the chief obstacles to its attainment. Thought only comes later when one is struggling to put into words what one saw, or what came to one so clearly at that moment of enlightenment.

XIV

THE DEATH OF GURDJIEFF

NEWS REACHED US IN 1948 that Mr. Gurdjieff was shortly sailing for America, where he was going to arrange for the publication of the first series of his books and I decided that I must see him before he left. It was an inconvenient moment for leaving London, but it is never convenient to set out deliberately to change mechanical routines. Awkward or not, I felt that it was essential that I should go to Paris. Gurdjieff was an old man now, and a rumour had reached us that he was not in the best of health.

I climbed the stairs of the building in the Rue des Colonels Rénard, and knocked at the door of Gurdjieff's flat. It was opened by Lise Tracol and I entered a hall which seemed to have become even smaller than it had been before. This was explained by the fact that it now contained three or four large trunks, packed and ready for Gurdjieff's voyage. I was told that he had to take a great deal of kitchen equipment to New York because he entertained people on a large scale in his New York Hotel, and prepared for them certain dishes over a bedroom stove.

Gurdjieff gave me his usual warm welcome and he invited me to sit opposite him again at the head of the table. "Was I becoming accustomed to these strange surroundings?" I asked myself this question as I seated myself in a room in which up till now I had felt very far from being 'at home'. Why did I think it was nice to be back again? I disliked gulping down vodka

as much as I had disliked it previously, and I attributed my pleasure at being back to the warmth of Gurdjieff's reception. However disturbing Gurdjieff's behaviour might be—it was of course his function to disturb people's complacency—he had a faculty for inspiring affection in those who were not frightened of him, and I was no longer frightened of him. He was engaged, at that particular moment, in disturbing the self-esteem of a rather cock-sure young man. "You are a turkey-cock," he said. And by blowing out his neck, rearing his head and giving vent to an excellent 'gobble-gobble' he conjured up, for us, a turkey-cock. What a lot, Madame Ouspensky had got from Gurdjieff. Her manner of drawing attention to people's personal peculiarities was entirely modelled on the methods of Gurdjieff. For a moment or two I was back again in the dining-room with Madame Ouspensky at Lyne Place listening to her, but I was suddenly recalled to Paris, for Gurdjieff had started to talk to somebody else. "Why do you look at me as one bull looks at another bull?" he inquired of a man with a rather challenging expression on his face. And, by slightly altering the carriage of his head, the line of his mouth, and the expresssion of his eyes, Gurdjieff produced for us a challenging bull. In the past Gurdjieff had earned his living in many different ways, but, so far as I know, he had never earned it as an actor or a public entertainer. He could certainly have done this.

My visit to Paris was a very short one, and I did not see Gurdjieff again till some months after his return from America. When I did go to Paris I was struck by the great change that had occurred in him and it was obvious to me that his health had markedly deteriorated since I had last seen him. His breathing had become much more difficult and the tinge of blueness in his lips and his face had deepened. Sitting as near to him as I sat, I was in a position to arrive at some sort of tentative diagnosis, and what I now saw alarmed me not a little. His girth appeared to have increased and although I could not examine his ankles I thought it likely that they were also swollen. He had the general appearance of a man who was suffering from ascites (fluid in the abdomen), and his 'blueness' suggested that his heart and his circulation were now beginning to feel the strain of it all. I had heard previously

from Madame de Salzmann that there were several highly competent medical men in Gurdjieff's Paris group, and that two of them were looking after him. Should they have allowed him to be up and about in his present state of health? I doubted this. But few people in that state would have attempted to do all that Gurdjieff was still managing to do. Nine people out of ten would, by now, have been confined to bed, with a day and night nurse in attendance. Gurdjieff was not my patient, and he would be a very difficult patient to handle, but I made up my mind to speak to him on the subject of his own health, at the first opportunity. I had been told that an outside doctor had recently offered Gurdjieff his medical opinion, without being asked for it, and that Gurdjieff had replied "You may be a very clever doctor, but you are also a very great fool." In spite of the risk attached to interfering with the medical treatment of Gurdjieff I decided to talk to him about his health.

My opportunity came when I was summoned into his sanctum to bid him good-bye. "They tell me that you are leaving today?" he said. "Yes, I have to get back," I replied. "Thank you for all you have . . . " He waved aside my thanks. "This is your home and you are always welcome here." Then he pointed to the small table in his room. On it, Lise had placed, not only the usual coffee cups and cigarettes, but also a big round tin, and on top of it, a bottle of vodka! "Those are for you, and the vodka, it will last you a week," Gurdjieff said, pointing to the table. "I shall find some opportunity for sending you another bottle in a week's time, through some other person returning to England. The tin contains guava jelly. Take one, then take the other."

"Thank you, but there is something else about which I want to talk to you. I am not your doctor, Mr. Gurdjieff, but I cannot help looking at you through medical eyes, and I feel that you are neglecting your medical treatment. Please . . . "

"We are expecting a special medicine to arrive from America at any time now, by aeroplane. My medical advisors have cabled for it, and I shall take it as soon as it arrives."

"Yes, but it may not cure you unless you go into a hosptial, or a nursing home, and get other treatment as well."

"In that case I will go into a hospital and I will do what they tell me to do," he replied with a smile. "Don't forget your present," he added after I had bidden him good-bye, and had turned in the direction of the door. "Come again soon, and then I shall give you some more." Mirth lurked in his eyes.

"Was he laughing at me deep down in himself?" I picked up the bottle rather ruefully and then, looking at Gurdjieff I saw that he was enjoying a joke. Much as I disliked vodka, I felt a similar gurgle of laughter bubbling up from deep within me also.

I bade him "Good-bye," again, and then closed the door of the store-room behind me for what was to be the last time. I made my way slowly down the stone stairs leading to the hall and by the time I had reached it the laughter within me had died away, and had been replaced by a feeling of deep affection for the man to whom all of us owed so much. I realized at that moment that I would have a great deal to tell those followers of Ouspensky who, so far, had made no contact with the source of all our knowledge. But how would I be able to put into words all that I now felt about Gurdjieff? I had never met anybody like him before, and it would be difficult to give them a correct impression of him. The feature in him which I should try to convey to them was that he was a man of infinite compassion for all mankind.

Two weeks later, news came to us in London that an American physician, a devoted follower of Gurdjieff's, had flown from the States to Paris, and by sheer stubbornness and force of character, had swept Gurdjieff into the American Hospital in Paris, where he was now having treatment. We waited anxiously for further news. Then there arrived in London from Paris a series of staccato telephone messages: 'The drawing off of the fluid from the abdomen has been successfully accomplished'; 'Mr. Gurdjieff is better'; 'A grave complication has arisen'; 'Mr. Gurdjieff is critically ill'; 'Mr. Gurdjieff is dying'; 'Mr. Gurdjieff is dead'.

Gurdjieff dead! It was difficult to believe it. All that vigour, all that force of character, all that intelligence, all that compassion; all of these astonishing characteristics of Gurdjieff's had disappeared. What a disaster. Or perhaps it was not a disaster. Gurdjieff was a man who planned so many things deliberately, instead

of allowing them to happen accidentally. Had he perhaps planned his own death also? It was quite possible. Perhaps he had felt that we were all becoming too dependent on him and had reached the conclusion that the best thing for the progress of his work was that he should withdraw? This was unlikely, but one could never be sure with a man like Gurdjieff. He was capable of doing anything, and even of dying, if the work demanded of him, that he should die.

Gurdjieff was buried in accordance with the rituals and the customs of the Greek Orthodox Church, to which he belonged. I attended a memorial service to him, held, not in Paris, but in London about a week after his death. It was held in the Russian Orthodox Church in Ennismore Gardens, and a memorial service has been held there annually ever since his death. However much the man for whom we all mourned may have sinned against conventional morality—and in the eyes of many he had sinned grievously—he undoubtedly possessed a very great capacity for arousing devotion amongst his followers. This was, and continues to be, evident at the Memorial Services held in Ennismore Gardens, usually taken by Bishop Blum himself. Love inspires love, and as I have already said, Gurdjieff was a man of great compassion. And what, after all, is great compassion but the capacity to give affection and to inspire it in others?

Everything in Gurdjieff was on a very big scale, so that no one could meet him and talk to him in a state of indifference. They either liked him or else they feared and disliked him. This meant that he had as many enemies as he had friends. Kneeling in the Greek Orthodox Church in Ennismore Gardens on the occasion of the first memorial service I recalled some of the many talks that I had been privileged to have with him. I tried to recall anything which he had said, or had written in his books, having a bearing on the subject of death. I knew what Ouspensky thought about this subject. But what did Gurdjieff think? In *All and Everything* he writes that death is the sacred Rascuarno. It is the moment at which certain finer constituents in a man separate off from his grosser body, the moment at which everything returns to the source from which it has originally come. But did this mean that

after this process has been completed, nothing individual or characteristic of that particular man remains? I knew that Gurdjieff accepted the idea held also by Theosophists, the old Indian idea that finer materials interpenetrate the grosser body of a man and that these finer bodies are capable of surviving the decay of the grosser body. But, as previously stated, Gurdjieff differed from the Theosophists in maintaining that it was only more highly evolved men who possessed these finer bodies.

There came back also into my mind the words of the toast to which I had often drunk, sitting there opposite Gurdjieff at the end of the table, and I wondered what bearing the words of the toast had on the difficult problem of death, and of what happened to a man afterwards. Again Gurdjieff seemed to have made a distinction between an ordinary man and a more highly evolved man. The toast we had all drunk ran as follows: 'To all those who are candidates for an *honourable death*, and to the health of those who are candidates for perishing like dogs!' Repeating these words now quietly to myself I placed the emphasis where it had always been placed on the word 'honourable'. It was invariably put on the two kinds of *endings* for the purpose of bringing out the marked differences between the fates of the two different varieties of candidates. And as I repeated to myself again these words, I could see in my imagination, Gurdjieff begin to turn his great head and to look gravely round the table, in order to make sure that we had all understood the full import of the toast.

Gurdjieff was dead, but he continued to exert a very great influence over all of us who had met him. We were linked with him, and we were also linked together by many different bonds, and particularly now by our feelings of joint responsibility for the continuation of the 'work'. And as my mind wandered into the past, I recalled another evening at Gurdjieff's flat. It was the evening on which, during supper, Gurdjieff had suddenly inquired of me, my age. On being told it, he said with a smile, "Ah, you could have been my son. I have many sons and daughters, some of them of my own flesh and blood, and others who are my *spiritual* sons and daughters. I now make you one of my spiritual sons." I had been too caught up in a wave of emotion to make a

suitable reply to the honour he had just done me, and I sat there silent and embarrassed. Now, it was too late. He would never know now, how much I had appreciated his words. No, in all probability he knew. I now found comfort in the thought that a man of Gurdjieff's insight must surely have known the explanation of my silence. Perhaps it did not matter so much that I had not attempted to put my own feelings into words. But I should have liked, all the same, to have received my spiritual father's formal blessing.

Fortunately the death of Gurdjieff was very far from being the end of the 'work' either in Europe or in America. The disappearance of our teacher has led, if anything, to a more rapid spread of the ideas which his followers have received from him. Thanks to Madame de Salzmann, Gurdjieff's chief helper in Paris, there has been a drawing together of the four main centres that are working along Gurdjieff's lines, that is to say, the large groups in Paris, in London, and the two chief American groups in New York and New Jersey. The London group also now receives a great deal of help from the Paris group. Several of Gurdjieff's French group come over, every week, to take meetings, and to instruct us in the sacred dances and the special movements which form so important a part of Gurdjieff's methods of awakening a man out of his sleep. Another striking feature of the work at the present time is the strong sense of personal responsibility for its future which is so noticeable amongst the more senior members of the French, American, English and subsidiary continental groups.

Gurdjieff always placed great emphasis on the *responsibilities* and the *obligations* of those who had been working longest with the methods of development which he had brought back from his Eastern travels. I can recall a certain evening in Paris when he talked to us on this particular subject. Realizing that I was probably the oldest of the people present, with the exception of himself, he turned towards the younger people and said: "You will have noticed that I do not treat everybody in the same way. I pay special respect to seniority, and so must you." Then looking at me he added "And you, on your part, you must discharge your special responsibilities, as an older person. When people apply to you for help, you must give them what they have the right to

expect to receive from you. It is necessary always to bear in mind the fact that every age-group has its own appropriate duties to perform."

It is indeed a general principle of the 'work' that the older a person is in the work, the more is expected of him or her. Displays of self-love and egoism which would be overlooked in younger and less experienced people cannot be tolerated in those who have been 'in the work' for a long time.

As has been said before, everything in Gurdjieff was on a very big scale, his faults as well as his virtues. He was reputed by some people to be the 'devil' and it is true that there was an element of mischief and devilry, in Gurdjieff's make-up. He admitted this himself and he even declared that one could learn something from a study of the devil's methods. "He is a 'chevalier' and he knows a great deal, whereas the angel in us is often rather stupid." It was inevitable that Gurdjieff should often provoke strong reactions in those with whom he came into contact. Indeed he often aroused these reactions deliberately. He told us that there were two touchstones to an individual's character, and that he sometimes made use of these tests. A man was likely to reveal himself when questions were put to him about money and also when the problem of sex was brought up.

Gurdjieff required a great deal of money in order to carry out his work, and also for the support of a certain number of people who were entirely dependent on him. This meant that he had frequently to make use of the 'money test' to a man's character. People, he said, only valued articles for which they had themselves paid, and this being so, he had no hesitation in extracting financial contributions from all followers who were in a position to make them. He employed the word 'shearing' for this process of reducing a follower's bank balance, and it was usually an occasion for much badinage and mutual mirth, between the shearer and the onlookers. Money poured out of Gurdjieff's pocket, as quickly as it was poured into it, for he was always very princely in his gifts. He sometimes defrayed the expenses of people who were insufficiently well off to come to Paris to see him. He also helped to support odd people who had temporarily fallen

on bad times. Gurdjieff was well acquainted with poverty himself and, whether the following story be true or not, I cannot say, but I was once told that Gurdjieff had formerly been seen going the rounds of the Paris cafés, at night, for the purpose of collecting the stubs of old cigarettes that had been thrown away by the café customers! He spent comparatively little on himself and he had no interest at all in money except as a means of carrying out his work.

XV

A COMMENTARY ON *ALL AND EVERYTHING*

ESOTERIC KNOWLEDGE is passed down the generations orally, from teacher to pupil and it was in this way that Gurdjieff's followers learned the ideas of his system. But as was stated in a previous chapter, after Gurdjieff's accident he decided that he must make use also of the written word. He planned therefore to write three books, two of which *All and Everything* and *Meetings with Remarkable Men* have now been published. The third work is unlikely ever to be published because it was written only for those of his followers who had sufficient personal experience of 'the work' to profit by reading this third work.

It is with *All and Everything* that this chapter is mainly concerned. Extracts from this book provided most of the earlier readings in Gurdjieff's flat, and he always advised that these should be read aloud, and that they should be read three times. *All and Everything* is a difficult book to understand, partly on account of the richness of its symbolism, and partly because of the language in which it is written. It would almost seem that its author deliberately made *All and Everything* difficult to understand, acting on a principle which he recognized, the principle that people value only those things which have entailed payment. One of Gurdjieff's oldest followers, Jane Heap, told me once that if the audience that attended the earlier readings of *All and Everything* grasped the meaning of his book too readily, Gurdjieff sometimes exclaimed "We must bury that bone a little deeper!"

Beelzebub acts as Gurdjieff's mouthpiece in *All and Everything* and Ahoon, Beelzebub's old servant, represents man's body. Like Ahoon, the body is man's servant, but it has very little understanding of higher things. Hassein, Beelzebub's grandson, is particularly interested in the strange behaviour of the earth-dwellers, and he is obviously a young man who possesses a 'magnetic centre'. Hassein asks intelligent and discriminating questions about these earth-dwellers and his grandfather answers them. Amongst these answers is Beelzebub's statement that the people in whom his grandson is so interested 'exist in conditions which are not becoming to three-centred beings'. Not only are the earth-dwellers ignorant of the fact that they have a part to play in the many activities of the universe but they are unaware of the relationship existing between its various constituents. For example they fail to grasp the closeness of the relationship existing between the various heavenly bodies, and between organic life, as a whole, and the earth. They are ignorant also of the fact that nature requires for her purposes the presence in organic life of a certain number of more highly evolved beings.

With the help of Beelzebub, Gurdjieff describes what is meant by a more highly evolved man. Beelzebub tells Hassein that men differ not only with respect to the level of their consciousness but also with respect to their reasons, the two being very closely related. Beelzebub states that the reason possessed by a more highly evolved man is a 'reason of understanding'. The animal world has only an instinctive form of reason, a faculty which ordinary man shares with the animals. Such reasoning as this may be based on nothing more reliable than a loose association of words and much hard work will have to be done by ordinary men if they are to acquire a 'reason of understanding'.

Speaking through Beelzebub, Gurdjieff points out that the chief aim of a man should be to reach a higher level of consciousness and thus acquire objective reason. When a man manages to do this he becomes a 'permanent brain-cell of all-life'. This puts him in a position in which he is able to assist in what Beelzebub called the 'redemption of creation'. To a materialist and to a scientist such statements as these may appear to be nonsensical,

but they are nonsensical only because materialists and many scientists regard the universe as being an elaborate piece of machinery which has somehow or other come into existence spontaneously. But if we accept the idea that the universe is both *alive* and *intelligent*, then Beelzebub's statements about the responsibilities of man to it are no longer absurd.

Fortunately many radical changes have taken place in scientific thought during the last fifty years. We now realize that neither the vast universe around us, nor the infinitely small universe of the atom can be described in terms only of mechanism. When Einstein introduced his special theory of relativity in 1904, he brought about a veritable revolution in general thought, quite apart from the revolution he produced in the more limited realm of physics. He destroyed for good man's confidence in the universal validity of the two separate concepts of space and time, and he replaced these concepts with the more accommodating concept of a four-dimensional space-time continuum.

At the same time that Einstein was developing his relativity theory, other scientists, and notably Bohr, Rutherford and Planck, were exploring the universe of the infinitely small which lies within the atom. They sought to discover the laws which govern the inner world of the atom, and in the course of their investigations they found that it was no longer possible to study electrons *individually* because the mere process of observing an electron might affect its behaviour. And with the breakdown of the purely mechanical conception of the great universe, and also of the small universe of the atom, there came other changes in scientific thought, changes which made James Jeans write in his book *The Mysterious Universe*:

> The stream of knowledge is leading us towards a non-mechanical reality; the Universe begins to look more like a great thought than a great machine.

Even the Russian scientists will be forced, in the end, to abandon their entirely materialistic conception of the universe and of our lives as human beings in that universe. In an article written in a magazine entitled *World* (a periodical sponsored by

an association of 'World Goodwill' and 'World Union'), Ian Gordon-Brown tells us that some of the leading Russian scientists have recently published papers 'in which they state their view that the nature of the universe is "spiritual" rather than materialistic and mechanical'. The word 'spiritual' and 'material' have not, of course, been defined by these Russian writers. It would appear, however, that the essential meaning of their statements about the universe is that it is more closely related to the concepts of *mind* and *consciousness* than to the old wearisome and nihilistic ideas about matter.

Orage placed great emphasis on Gurdjieff's statement that man, the animals and the plants have important functions to perform in the economy of the earth, all of them transmitting different varieties of energy across the lower interval in the 'ray of creation octave. Each type of life is responsible for the transmitting onward of a certain variety of energy but because of the existence of certain unfavourable conditions man is no longer able to fulfil his function satisfactorily. Instead of developing into a 'man', as he should have done, he has remained a 'man-machine' and a 'man-machine' which has now become a menace to the earth.

> Hence human life here now exists only by Grace; and Nature has to 'puff and blow' in order that the human machine may be made to work.
>
> (Orage)

This idea that something is amiss and that something has gone wrong with man's development is in harmony with the Biblical myth about the 'Fall of Man'. But how did this mishap to man come about? In *All and Everything* man's lack of understanding is attributed to his having been equipped, at an early stage of his development, with an utterly misleading organ, which Gurdjieff calls 'Kunderbuffer'. This distorting organ has been responsible for man's seeing everything upside down, and for his remaining asleep and living in a world of dreams. Gurdjieff states that man has become so highly suggestible to everything he hears that he accepts any 'slogan' which has been uttered four or five times in his presence. In his commentary, Orage complains that modern men are entirely lacking in discrimination. He writes:

Why is it that we are *not* heirs of all the ages? Why this urge to destroy the old? Why, instead of standing on the shoulders of the past, do we have to begin and begin, and to arrive at a state, in many of the arts and the sciences, inferior to the ancients? Why do we believe and hope in 'progress', when all around us there are proofs that we are *deteriorating*, and are working day and night to produce forces that will destroy, even such as we are?

There is nothing fantastic in Gurdjieff's teaching that man has a special cosmic function to perform, and that a mishap has occurred which now prevents him from discharging it. It is certainly true that *homo sapiens* has not developed in the way that he might have been expected to have developed. His knowledge has increased a hundred-fold, in the last two thousand years, but in many ways, his understanding has declined. Religion, which formerly gave man instructions for his spiritual re-birth, has very little influence over him now. Religion has been replaced, to a large extent, by science and scientists are not concerned, as the religious leaders of the world were formerly concerned, with the 'why' of things. They are engaged only in taking things to pieces, and in explaining how they work. Orage makes the following comment on modern trends of thought.

One of the current views of life is that there is no cosmic purpose, no conscious aim, that protoplasm was formed accidentally, and that man was created for the State, whose object is to provide him with an increasing standard of living—in the future! A third view is that God is omnipotent and all-loving; he created the world out of sheer benevolence, and presides over the universe with no idea that his children should be happy; that we have no duty except to each other, that man was given power over the earth and the animals, and is authorized to exploit them; this is the attitude of the ordinary, over-indulged child towards its parents; of the child not old enough to realize that nothing comes which does not cost nature, or someone, something. This last is a widespread attitude and it is in the doctrine of the organized Christian Church.

Gurdjieff used Ashiata Shiemash as his alternative mouthpiece to Beelzebub in *All and Everything*, and Ashiata Shiemash sums up man's spiritual duties on this planet in what he calls the *Five Moral Strivings*. These are as follows:

1. The first striving is to have in one's ordinary being-existence everything satisfying and really necessary for our planetary bodies.
2. The second striving is to have a constant and unflagging instinctive need for self-perfection in the sense of *being*.
3. The third striving is to know ever more and more concerning the laws of World Creation and World Maintenance.
4. The fourth striving is the striving, from the very beginning of our existence, to pay for our arising and for our individuality, as quickly as possible, in order afterwards to be free and to lighten, as much as possible, the sorrows of our COMMON FATHER.
5. The fifth striving is always to assist the most rapid perfectioning of other beings, both those similar to oneself, and those of other forms, up to the degree of Martfotzi, that is, up to the degree of self-individuality.

The chapters in *Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson* on which Gurdjieff laid a special stress and which were most frequently selected for reading in Paris, were the chapters on the Holy Planet Purgatory, and the chapter which dealt with the divine messenger Ashiata Shiemash, and with his special mission to mankind. Gurdjieff relates how Ashiata Shiemash began his mission by submitting himself to a long fast, and by meditating on the best way to discharge his obligations to the earth. He realized immediately that it would be utterly useless for him to appeal to the old out-dated *values* to which previous divine messengers had always appealed, namely the three values of Faith, Hope and Charity. It would be useless for him to do this because man's 'mentation has degenerated to such a low level that he is no longer able to grasp the true import of these sacred "being-impulses" '. For this reason Ashiata Shiemash decided to appeal to something still existent in man, and not yet atrophied. He would appeal to that faculty in man which is known as his *conscience*. Gurdjieff writes:

Thanks to the abnormal conditions established here (on this earth) the factor *Conscience* has gradually penetrated and become embedded in that 'consciousness' which is called here 'sub-consciousness', in consequence of which it takes no part whatever in the functioning of man's ordinary consciousness.

This being so, the divine messenger Ashiata Shemas decided to try to awaken in man, so far as this was possible, the conscience which had become submerged in his sub-conscious mind. He felt that if he could succeed in doing this, man's awakened conscience might participate 'in the general functioning of that Consciousness of theirs in which they pass their "waking existence" '. The chapter ends with a description of the successful discharge of Ashiata Shiemash's spiritual mission, and with an account of the peace and goodwill on earth which followed it.

I have reason to believe that Gurdjieff visualized his own *being*—'*parktdolgduty*' to the universe in terms which were very similar to those in which Ashiata Shiemash visualized his obligations, and that in this chapter of his book Ashiata Shiemash is speaking for Gurdjieff. Later on Gurdjieff tells us how Ashiata Shiemash's good work was destroyed by the action of a certain 'learned being' with the name of Lentrohamsanin. This mischief-maker disseminated a number of conflicting ideas amongst Ashiata Shiemash's followers, and thus brought about a great deal of confusion in their minds. Did Gurdjieff envisage that a similar fate would happen to his own teaching after his death? I do not think so. He usually spoke optimistically about the future of 'the work' and about the value of the ideas that he and his fellow 'seekers of the truth' had brought back to Europe. He appeared to be of the opinion that the importance of these ideas would be more and more widely recognized after his death, and that the number of people working with them would steadily increase, as indeed at present appears to be happening.

The death of a teacher is almost always followed by a highly critical period for his disciples. Divisions and differences of opinion occur amongst them, and although it is quite true that this has happened, to some extent, among the followers of Gurdjieff, the number of divisions and defections has been comparatively small. Thanks to their wise handling by Madame de Salzmann, the Gurdjieff groups scattered widely over the world are managing to continue their work, on an increasing scale. There has been a drawing together of different units, rather than a widening of the divisions between them. These scattered groups co-operate in

every way that the distances between them allow them to co-operate. The largest centres of 'the work' are those in Paris, London and New York, but smaller subsidiary centres are to be found in many other countries and cities. These scattered centres join together in many joint enterprises, such as in the publication of books, the making of films of the sacred dances and movements, and the production of gramophone records of the special music brought back by Gurdjieff to Europe. Up to the present, we have managed to avoid the disasters which so rapidly destroyed the work of Gurdjieff's great prototype in *All and Everything*, Ashiata Shiemash.

Quality is of far greater importance than size is and, in the opinion of the writer of this book, both quality and numbers are in the ascendant. When I first went to Warwick Gardens, some forty years ago, few *young* people were to be seen in Ouspensky's audience, and it is in the hands of the young that the future of every movement lies. It is reassuring therefore that Gurdjieff's teaching appeals now to so many young people. I realized that it did appeal to them during my first visits to Paris in 1948 and I made the following comment on it in a book written soon afterwards, and called *Venture with Ideas*:

One of the most striking features of these last reunions in Rue des Colonels Rénards was the number of young people who crowded round Gurdjieff's table, especially after his return from America. Those of his followers who were parents seemed to have realized that the moment had come for taking their children to Paris. Their children might understand very little as yet, but they wanted them to be able to recall, in later years, having met, a long time ago, a very remarkable man in France, a certain Mr. Gurdjieff. To ensure their being able to do this, children, ranging in age from three to fourteen were now being brought to Paris, and were being invited to the flat in Rue des Colonels Rénards. There they sat at Gurdjieff's table, warmly welcomed and specially entertained by him. He had the simplicity of all truly great men, and he enjoyed their presence at his table, loading them with presents and sometimes causing their parents embarrassment by the amount of food he pressed on them. Some of the children were shy, but most of them were at their ease, laughing at his jokes and promptly replying to his questions. For him, very young people were of far

greater importance than the rest of us, for they were representatives of a future generation of men and women, a generation which had not yet been ruined and which, by right teaching and upbringing, might possibly be saved. I like to remember these youthful gatherings, for when I look back on them I recall not only the happy children but Gurdjieff in a new role, Gurdjieff in the role of grandfather, dispenser of gifts and enjoyer of fun.

I like to think of Gurdjieff in that particular role.

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