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# Gurdjieff's Aphorisms

## inscribed in a special script above the walls of the Study House at the Prieuré

1. Like what "it" does not like.
2. The highest that a man can attain is to be able to do.
3. The worse the conditions of life the more productive the work, always provided you remember the work.
4. Remember yourself always and everywhere.
5. Remember you come here having already understood the necessity of struggling with yourself—only with yourself. Therefore thank everyone who gives you the opportunity.
6. Here we can only direct and create conditions, but not help.
7. Know that this house can be useful only to those who have recognized their nothingness and who believe in the possibility of changing.
8. If you already know it is bad and do it, you commit a sin difficult to redress.
9. The chief means of happiness in this life is the ability to consider externally always, internally never.
10. Do not love art with your feelings.
11. A true sign of a good man is if he loves his father and mother.
12. Judge others by yourself and you will rarely be mistaken.
13. Only help him who is not an idler.
14. Respect every religion.
15. I love him who loves work.
16. We can only strive to be able to be Christians.
17. Don't judge a man by the tales of others.
18. Consider what people think of you—not what they say.
19. Take the understanding of the East and the knowledge of the West—and then seek.
20. Only he who can take care of what belongs to others may have his own.
21. Only conscious suffering has any sense.
22. It is better to be temporarily an egoist than never to be just.
23. Practice love first on animals, they are more sensitive.
24. By teaching others you will learn yourself.
25. Remember that here work is not for work's sake but is only a means.
26. Only he can be just who is able to put himself in the position of others.
27. If you have not by nature a critical mind your staying here is useless.
28. He who has freed himself of the disease of "tomorrow" has a chance to attain what he came here for.
29. Blessed is he who has a soul, blessed is he who has none, but woe and grief to him who has it in embryo.
30. Rest comes not from the quantity but from the quality of sleep.
31. Sleep little without regret.

32. The energy spent on active inner work is then and there transformed into a fresh supply, but that spent on passive work is lost for ever.
33. One of the best means for arousing the wish to work on yourself is to realize that you may die at any moment. But first you must learn how to keep it in mind.
34. Conscious love evokes the same in response. Emotional love evokes the opposite. Physical love depends on type and polarity.
35. Conscious faith is freedom. Emotional faith is slavery. Mechanical faith is foolishness.
36. Hope, when bold, is strength. Hope, with doubt, is cowardice. Hope, with fear, is weakness.
37. Man is given a definite number of experiences—economizing them, he prolongs his life.
38. Here there are neither Russians nor English, Jews nor Christians, but only those who pursue one aim—to be able to be.

## **Selected Excerpts from the Talks and Writings of G. I. Gurdjieff**

Every branch of science endeavors to elaborate and to establish an exact language for itself. But there is no universal language. For exact understanding exact language is necessary.... This new language is based on the principle of relativity; that is to say, it introduces relativity into all concepts and thus makes possible an accurate determination of the angle of thought—making it possible to establish at once what is being said, from what point of view and in what connection. In this new language all ideas are concentrated round one idea. This central idea is the idea of evolution ... *and the evolution of man is the evolution of his consciousness.*

G. I. Gurdjieff, paraphrased from page 70 of *IN SEARCH OF THE MIRACULOUS*

### **Philosophy and Religion**

THERE DO EXIST ENQUIRING MINDS, which long for the truth of the heart, seek it, strive to solve the problems set by life, try to penetrate to the essence of things and phenomena and to penetrate into themselves. If a man reasons and thinks soundly, no matter which path he follows in solving these problems, he must inevitably arrive back at himself, and begin with the solution of the problem of what he is himself and what his place is in the world around him. For without this knowledge, he will have no focal point in his search. Socrates' words, "Know thyself" remain for all those who seek true knowledge and being.

LIBERATION LEADS TO LIBERATION. These are the first words of truth—not truth in quotation marks but truth in the real meaning of the word; truth which is not merely theoretical, not simply a word, but truth that can be realized in practice. The meaning behind these words may be explained as follows:

By liberation is meant the liberation which is the aim of all schools, all religions, at all times.

This liberation can indeed be very great. All men desire it and strive after it. But it cannot be attained without the first liberation, a lesser liberation. The great liberation is liberation from influences outside us. The lesser liberation is liberation from influences within us.

RELIGION IS DOING; a man does not merely *think* his religion or feel it, he ‘lives’ his religion as much as he is able, otherwise it is not religion but fantasy or philosophy. Whether he likes it or not he shows his attitude towards religion by his actions and he can show his attitude *only by his actions*. Therefore if his actions are opposed to those which are demanded by a given religion he cannot assert that he belongs to that religion.

ONE MUST LEARN TO PRAY, JUST AS ONE MUST LEARN EVERYTHING ELSE. Whoever knows how to pray and is able to concentrate in the proper way, his prayer can give results. But it must be understood that there are different prayers and that their results are different. This is known even from ordinary divine service. But when we speak of prayer or of the results of prayer we always imply only one kind of prayer—petition, or we think that petition can be united with all other kinds of prayers.... Most prayers have nothing in common with petitions. I speak of ancient prayers; many of them are much older than Christianity. These prayers are, so to speak, *recapitulations*; by repeating them aloud or to himself a man endeavors to experience what is in them, their whole content, with his mind and his feeling.

THE COMMANDMENT INCULCATED IN ME IN MY CHILDHOOD, enjoining that “the highest aim and sense of human life is the striving to attain the welfare of one’s neighbor,” and that this is possible exclusively only by the conscious renunciation of one’s own.

ALL THE BEINGS OF THIS PLANET THEN BEGAN TO WORK in order to have in their consciousness this Divine function of genuine conscience, and for this purpose, as everywhere in the Universe, they transubstantiated in themselves what are called the ‘being-obligolnian-strivings’ which consist of the following five, namely:

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

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

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

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

And the fifth: the striving always to assist the most rapid perfecting of other beings, both those similar to oneself and those of other forms, up to the degree of the sacred 'Martfotai' that is up to the degree of self-individuality.

*BEELZEBUB'S TALES*, pp. 385–386

IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO EXPLAIN WHAT TAKES PLACE IN ME when I see or hear anything majestic which allows no doubt that it proceeds from the actualization of Our Maker Creator. Each time, my tears flow of themselves. I weep, that is to say, it weeps in me, not from grief, no, but as if from tenderness. I became so, gradually, after meeting Father Giovanni....

After that meeting my whole inner and outer world became for me quite different. In the definite views which had become rooted in me in the course of my whole life, there took place, as it were by itself, a revaluation of all values.

Before that meeting, I was a man wholly engrossed in my own personal interests and pleasures, and also in the interests and pleasures of my children. I was always occupied with thoughts of how best to satisfy my needs and the needs of my children.

Formerly, it may be said, my whole being was possessed by egoism. All my manifestations and experiencings flowed from my vanity. The meeting with Father Giovanni killed all this, and from then on there gradually arose in me that "something" which has brought the whole of me to the unshakable conviction that, apart from the vanities of life, there exists a "something else" which must be the aim and ideal of every more or less thinking man, and that it is only this something else which may make a man really happy and give him real values, instead of the illusory "goods" with which in ordinary life he is always and in everything full.

*Professor Skridlov, MEETINGS WITH REMARKABLE MEN*, pp. 245–246

YES, PROFESSOR, KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING ARE QUITE DIFFERENT. Only understanding can lead to being, whereas knowledge is but a passing presence in it. New knowledge displaces the old and the result is, as it were, a pouring from the empty into the void.

One must strive to understand; this alone can lead to our Lord God.

And in order to be able to understand the phenomena of nature, according and not according to law, proceeding around us, one must first of all consciously perceive and assimilate a mass of information concerning objective truth and the real events which took place on earth in the past; and secondly, one must bear in oneself all the results of all kinds of voluntary and involuntary experiencings.

*MEETINGS WITH REMARKABLE MEN*, p. 242

FAITH CAN NOT BE GIVEN TO MAN. Faith arises in a man and increases in its action in him not as the result of automatic learning, that is, not from any automatic

ascertainment of height, breadth, thickness, form and weight, or from the perception of anything by sight, hearing, touch, smell or taste, but from understanding.

Understanding is the essence obtained from information intentionally learned and from all kinds of experiences personally experienced.

*MEETINGS WITH REMARKABLE MEN*, p. 240

ALL RELIGIONS SPEAK ABOUT DEATH DURING THIS LIFE ON EARTH. Death must come before rebirth. But what must die? False confidence in one's own knowledge, self-love and egoism. Our egoism must be broken. We must realize that we are very complicated machines, and so this process of breaking is bound to be a long and difficult task. Before real growth becomes possible, our personality must die.

*VIEWS FROM THE REAL WORLD*, p. 86

THE SOLE MEANS NOW FOR THE SAVING OF THE BEINGS OF THE PLANET EARTH would be to implant again into their presences a new organ, an organ like Kundabuffer, but this time of such properties that every one of those unfortunates during the process of existence should constantly sense and be cognizant of the inevitability of his own death as well as of the death of everyone upon whom his eyes or attention rests.

Only such a sensation and such a cognizance can now destroy the egoism completely crystallized in them that has swallowed up the whole of their Essence and also that tendency to hate others which flows from it—the tendency, namely, which engenders all those mutual relationships existing there, which serve as the chief cause of all their abnormalities unbecoming to three-brained beings and maleficent for them themselves and for the whole of the Universe.

*BEELZEBUB'S TALES*, p. 1183

WILL IS A SIGN OF A BEING OF A VERY HIGH ORDER OF EXISTENCE as compared with the being of an ordinary man. Only men who are in possession of such a being can do. All other men are merely automata, put into action by external forces like machines or clockwork toys, acting as much and as long as the wound-up spring within them acts, and not capable of adding anything to its force.

*VIEWS FROM THE REAL WORLD*, p. 71

Faith of consciousness is freedom  
Faith of feeling is weakness  
Faith of body is stupidity.

Love of consciousness evokes the same in response  
Love of feeling evokes the opposite  
Love of body depends only on type and polarity.

Hope of consciousness is strength  
Hope of feelings is slavery  
Hope of body is disease.

## Science and Psychology

IN RIGHT KNOWLEDGE the study of man must proceed on parallel lines with the study of the world, and the study of the world must run parallel with the study of man. Laws are everywhere the same, in the world as well as in man. Having mastered the principles of any one law we must look for its manifestation in the world and in man simultaneously.... This parallel study of the world and of man shows the student the fundamental unity of everything and helps him to find analogies in phenomena of different orders.

*IN SEARCH OF THE MIRACULOUS*, p. 122

AS EVERYTHING IN THE UNIVERSE IS ONE, so, consequently, everything has equal rights, therefore from this point of view knowledge can be acquired by a suitable and complete study, no matter what the starting point is. Only one must know how to 'learn.' What is nearest to us is man; and you are the nearest of all men to yourself. Begin with the study of yourself; remember the saying 'Know thyself.'

*VIEWS FROM THE REAL WORLD*, p. 25

BUT OBJECTIVE KNOWLEDGE, THE IDEA OF UNITY INCLUDED, belongs to objective consciousness. The forms which express this knowledge when perceived by subjective consciousness are inevitably distorted and, instead of truth, they create more and more delusions. With objective consciousness it is possible to see and feel the unity of everything. But for subjective consciousness the world is split up into millions of separate and unconnected phenomena. Attempts to connect these phenomena into some sort of system in a scientific or philosophical way lead to nothing because man cannot reconstruct the idea of the whole starting from separate facts and they cannot divine the principles of the division of the whole without knowing the laws upon which this division is based.

*IN SEARCH OF THE MIRACULOUS*, p. 279

EVERY PHENOMENON, ON WHATEVER SCALE and in whatever world it may take place, from molecular to cosmic phenomena, is the result of the combination or the meeting of three different and opposing forces. Contemporary thought realizes the existence of two forces and the necessity of these two forces for the production of a phenomenon: force and resistance, positive and negative magnetism, positive and negative electricity, male and female cells, and so on. But it does not observe even these two forces always and everywhere. No question has ever been raised as to the third, or if it has been raised it has scarcely been heard.

*IN SEARCH OF THE MIRACULOUS*, p. 77

ALL THIS AND MANY OTHER THINGS CAN ONLY BE EXPLAINED WITH THE HELP OF THE LAW OF OCTAVES together with an understanding of the role and significance of 'intervals' which cause the line of the development of force constantly to change, to

go in a broken line, to turn round, to become its 'own opposite' and so on.

Such a course of things, that is, a change of direction, we can observe in everything. After a certain period of energetic activity or strong emotion or a right understanding a reaction comes, work becomes tedious and tiring; moments of fatigue and indifference enter into feeling; instead of right thinking a search for compromises begins; suppression, evasion of difficult problems. But the line continues to develop though now not in the same direction as at the beginning. Work becomes mechanical, feeling becomes weaker and weaker, descends to the level of the common events of the day; thought becomes dogmatic, literal. Everything proceeds in this way for a certain time, then again there is reaction, again a stop, again a deviation. The development of the force may continue but the work which was begun with great zeal and enthusiasm has become an obligatory and useless formality; a number of entirely foreign elements have entered into feeling—considering, vexation, irritation, hostility; thought goes round in a circle, repeating what was known before, and the way out which had been found becomes more and more lost.

The same thing happens in all spheres of human activity. In literature, science, art, philosophy, religion, in individual and above all in social and political life, we can observe how the line of the development of forces deviates from its original direction and goes, after a certain time, in a diametrically opposite direction, *still preserving its former name*.

IN SEARCH OF THE MIRACULOUS, p. 129

I ASK YOU TO BELIEVE NOTHING that you cannot verify for yourself.

VIEWS FROM THE REAL WORLD, p. 78

THE EVOLUTION OF MAN CAN BE TAKEN AS THE DEVELOPMENT IN HIM of those powers and possibilities which never develop by themselves, that is, mechanically. Only this kind of development, only this kind of growth, marks the real evolution of man. There is, and there can be, no other kind of evolution whatever....

In speaking of evolution it is necessary to understand from the outset that no mechanical evolution is possible. The evolution of man is the evolution of his consciousness. *And 'consciousness' cannot evolve unconsciously.* The evolution of man is the evolution of his will, and 'will' cannot evolve involuntarily. The evolution of man is the evolution of his power of doing, and 'doing' cannot be the result of things which 'happen.'

IN SEARCH OF THE MIRACULOUS, pp. 56, 58

BUT THE BEING OF TWO PEOPLE CAN DIFFER from one another more than the being of a mineral and of an animal. This is exactly what people do not understand. And they do not understand that *knowledge* depends on *being*. Not only do they not understand this latter but they definitely do not wish to understand it. And especially in Western culture it is considered that a man may possess great knowledge, for example he may be an able scientist, make discoveries, advance science, and at the same time he may be, and has a right to be, a petty, egoistic, caviling, mean, envious, vain, naïve, and absent-minded man. It seems to be considered here that a professor must always forget his umbrella everywhere.



*IN SEARCH OF THE MIRACULOUS*, p. 65

THERE ARE TWO LINES ALONG WHICH MAN'S DEVELOPMENT PROCEEDS, the line of *knowledge* and the line of *being*. In right evolution the line of knowledge and the line of being develop simultaneously, parallel to, and helping one another. But if the line of knowledge gets too far ahead of the line of being, or if the line of being gets ahead of the line of knowledge, man's development goes wrong, and sooner or later it must come to a standstill.

*IN SEARCH OF THE MIRACULOUS*, p. 64

THE POWER OF CHANGING ONESELF LIES NOT IN THE MIND, but in the body and the feelings. Unfortunately, however, our body and our feelings are so constituted that they don't care a jot about anything so long as they are happy. They live for the moment and their memory is short. The mind alone lives for tomorrow. Each has its own merits. The merit of the mind is that it looks ahead. But it is only the other two that can "do."

*VIEWS FROM THE REAL WORLD*, p. 222

DURING THE PERIOD OF MY YEAR OF SPECIAL OBSERVATIONS on all of their manifestations and perceptions, I made it categorically clear to myself that although the factors for engendering in their presences the sacred being-impulses of Faith, Hope, and Love are already quite degenerated in the beings of this planet, nevertheless, the factor which ought to engender that being-impulse on which the whole psyche of beings of a three-brained system is in general based, and which impulse exists under the name of Objective-Conscience, is not yet atrophied in them, but remains in their presences almost in its primordial state.

*BEELZEBUB'S TALES*, p. 359

THE GENERAL PSYCHE OF MAN IN ITS DEFINITIVE FORM is considered to be the result of conformity to these three independent worlds. The first is the outer world—in other words, everything existing outside him, both what he can see and feel as well as what is invisible and intangible for him. The second is the inner world—in other words, all the automatic processes of his nature and the mechanical repercussions of these processes. The third world is his own world, depending neither upon his "outer world" nor upon his "inner world"; that is to say, it is independent of the caprices of the processes that flow in him as well as of the imperfections in these processes that bring them about. A man who does not possess his own world can never do anything from his own initiative: all his actions "are done" in him. Only he can have his own initiative for perceptions and manifestations in whose common presence there has been formed, in an independent and intentional manner, the totality of factors necessary for the functioning of this third world.

*LIFE IS REAL ONLY THEN, WHEN "I AM,"* pp. 172–173

ONE OF MAN'S IMPORTANT MISTAKES, one which must be remembered, is his illusion in regard to his I.

Man such as we know him, the 'man-machine,' the man who cannot 'do,' and with

whom and through whom everything ‘happens,’ cannot have a permanent and single I. His I changes as quickly as his thoughts, feelings and moods, and he makes a profound mistake in considering himself always one and the same person; in reality he is *always a different person*, not the one he was a moment ago.

*Man has no permanent and unchangeable I.* Every thought, every mood, every desire, every sensation, says ‘I.’ And in each case it seems to be taken for granted that this I belongs to the *Whole*, to the whole man, and that a thought, a desire, or an aversion is expressed by this Whole. In actual fact there is no foundation whatsoever for this assumption. Man’s every thought and desire appears and lives quite separately and independently of the Whole. And the Whole never expresses itself, for the simple reason that it exists, as such, only physically as a thing, and in the abstract as a concept. Man has no individual I. But there are, instead, hundreds and thousands of separate small I’s, very often entirely unknown to one another, never coming into contact, or, on the contrary, hostile to each other, mutually exclusive and incompatible. Each minute, each moment, man is saying or thinking, ‘I.’ And each time his I is different. Just now it was a thought, now it is a desire, now a sensation, now another thought, and so on, endlessly. *Man is a plurality.* Man’s name is legion.

*IN SEARCH OF THE MIRACULOUS*, p. 59

TRY TO UNDERSTAND THAT WHAT YOU USUALLY CALL “I” IS NOT I; there are many “I’s” and each “I” has a different wish. Try to verify this. You wish to change, but which part of you has this wish? Many parts of you want many things, but only one part is real. It will be very useful for you to try to be sincere with yourself. Sincerity is the key which will open the door through which you will see your separate parts, and you will see something quite new. You must go on trying to be sincere. Each day you put on a mask, and you must take it off little by little.

*VIEWS FROM THE REAL WORLD*, p. 240

FROM MY POINT OF VIEW, HE CAN BE CALLED A REMARKABLE MAN who stands out from those around him by the resourcefulness of his mind, and who knows how to be restrained in the manifestations which proceed from his nature, at the same time conducting himself justly and tolerantly towards the weaknesses of others.

*MEETINGS WITH REMARKABLE MEN*, p. 31

## **Selected Excerpts from the Talks and Writings of G. I. Gurdjieff**

## Working For the Third World of Man

There are *two* struggles—inner-world struggle and outer-world struggle, but *never* can these two make contact, to make data for the third world. Not even God gives this possibility for contact between your inner- and outer-world struggles; not even your heredity. Only *one* thing—you must make *intentional contact* between outer-world struggle and inner-world struggle; only *then* can you make data for the Third World of Man, sometimes called World of the Soul.<sup>1</sup>

### Struggle Unceasingly

To possess the right to the name of ‘man,’ one must be one.

And to be such, one must first of all, with an indefatigable persistence and an unquenchable impulse of desire, issuing from all the separate independent parts constituting one’s entire common presence, that is to say, with a desire issuing simultaneously from thought, feeling, and organic instinct, work on an all-round knowledge of oneself—at the same time struggling unceasingly with one’s subjective weaknesses—and then afterwards, taking one’s stand upon the results thus obtained by one’s consciousness alone, concerning the defects in one’s established subjectivity as well as the elucidated means for the possibility of combatting them, strive for their eradication without mercy towards oneself.<sup>2</sup>

### Objective Conscience

In all three-brained beings of the whole of our Universe without exception, among whom are also we men, owing to the data crystallized in our common presences for engendering in us the Divine impulse of conscience, “the-whole-of-us” and the whole of our essence, are, and must be, already in our foundation, only suffering.

And they must be suffering, because the completed actualizing of the manifestation of such a being-impulse in us can proceed only from the constant struggle of two quite opposite what are called “complexes-of-the-functioning” of those two sources which are of quite opposite origin, namely, between the processes of the functioning of our planetary body itself and the parallel functionings arising progressively from the coating and perfecting of our higher being-bodies within this planetary body of ours, which functionings in their totality actualize every kind of Reason in the three-centered beings.

In consequence of this, every three-centered being of our Great Universe, and also we men existing on the Earth, must, owing to the presence in us also of the factors for engendering the Divine impulse of “Objective Conscience,” always inevitably struggle with the arising and the proceeding within our common presences of two quite opposite functionings giving results always sensed by us either as “desires” or as “non-desires.”

And so, only he, who consciously assists the process of this inner struggle and consciously assists the “non-desires” to predominate over the desires, behaves just in accordance with the essence of our COMMON FATHER CREATOR HIMSELF; whereas he who with his consciousness assists the contrary, only increases HIS SORROW.<sup>3</sup>

## A-Field-of-Hope

You are given legs to walk; hands to prepare and take the necessary food; your nose and the organs connected with it are so adapted that you may take in and transform in yourself those World-substances by which there are coated in the three-brained beings similar to yourself both higher-being bodies, on one of which rests the hope of our COMMON ALL-EMBRACING CREATOR for help in His needs, for the purpose of actualizations foreseen by Him for the good of Everything Existing. . .

Although you were created for the purpose of the common-cosmic existence on planets, and although you were created also as ‘a-field-of-hope’ for the future expectations of our COMMON ALL-EMBRACING CREATOR—that is to say, created with the possibilities of coating in your presence that ‘Higher-Sacred’ for the possible arising of which the whole of our now existing World was just created—and in spite of the said possibilities given to you, that is to say, in spite of your having been created three-brained with possibilities of a logical mentation, yet you do not use this sacred property of yours for the purpose for which it was foreordained.<sup>4</sup>

## Seven Aspects of Work in Life

At the end of the meal, several people left the table to wash up. Mr Gurdjieff then turned to his neighbour on the left and reproached him for having carried out badly his role as *Director*.<sup>5</sup>

This seems a small thing to you. But for those who know how to conduct their affairs in life, it is a big thing.

There is not just one aspect. In reality there are seven of them. If you know how to conduct one of your affairs well, the others could go well, even automatically. But if you neglect only one of these aspects the result will be bad, even though you followed this business through your whole life.

If you assume the role of *director* you must control all aspects of it. You must be able to supervise very precisely all the details.

While fulfilling your obligations nothing else must count. Even if you have business worth millions, you must forget it. If you do this, when the time comes to transact your deals in millions you will know how to act in the same way. If you accustom yourself to do well the task of the present moment, you will learn to do everything well.

You are here, now. Sacrifice everything else. All your *presence* (attention), all your thoughts, all your associations must relate to the matter on which you are working.

In the ordinary things of life you must fulfill all your obligations. You must think of what is needed one or two weeks in advance and never fail. You have the time—you will know how to find it. Think well about all these aspects—prepare yourself. In reality you always lose time: with such an interior organization a man will never go far.<sup>6</sup>

## Separating Mind from Essence

Our mind, our thinking, has nothing in common with us, with our essence—no connection, no dependence. . .

The mind is capable of functioning independently, but it also has the capacity of becoming identified with the essence, of becoming a function of the essence. In the majority of those present, the mind does not try to be independent but is merely a function. . .

At present we are not capable of controlling our states, and so it cannot be demanded of us. But when we acquire this capacity, corresponding demands will be made.

In order to understand better what I mean, I shall give you an example: now, in a calm state, not reacting to anything or anyone, I decide to set myself the task of establishing a good relationship with Mr. B., because I need him for business purposes and can do what I wish only with his help. But I dislike Mr. B. for he is a very disagreeable man. He understands nothing. He is a blockhead. He is vile, anything you like. I am so made that these traits affect me. Even if he merely looks at me, I become irritated. If he talks nonsense, I am beside myself. I am only a man, so I am weak and cannot persuade myself that I need not be annoyed—I shall go on being annoyed.

Yet I can control myself, depending on how serious my desire is to gain the end I wish to gain through him. If I keep to this purpose, to this desire, I shall be able to do so. No matter how annoyed I may be, this state of wishing will be in my mind. No matter how furious, how beside myself I am, in a corner of my mind I shall still remember the task I set myself. My mind is unable to restrain me from anything, unable to make me feel this or that toward him, but it is able to remember. I say to myself: “You need him, so don’t be cross or rude to him.” It could even happen that I would curse him, or hit him, but my mind would continue to pluck at me, reminding me that I should not do so. But the mind is powerless to do anything.

This is precisely what anyone who has a serious desire not to identify himself with his essence can do. This is what is meant by “separating the mind from the essence.”

And what happens when the mind becomes merely a function? If I am annoyed, if I lose my temper, I shall think, or rather “it” will think, in accordance with this annoyance, and I shall see everything in the light of the annoyance. To hell with it!

And so I say that with a serious man—a simple, ordinary man without any extraordinary powers, but a grown-up man—whatever he decides, whatever problem he has set himself, that problem will always remain in his head. Even if he cannot achieve it in practice, he will always keep it in his mind. Even if he is influenced by other considerations, his mind will not forget the problem he has set himself. He has a duty to perform and, if he is honest, he will strive to perform it, because he is a grown-up man.

No one can help him in this remembering, in this separation of oneself from oneself. A man must do it for himself.<sup>7</sup>

## What Obligations Am I Under?

Only now have I come very clearly to understand that everything we have at the present time and everything we use—in a word, all the contemporary amenities and everything necessary for our comfort and welfare—have not always existed and did not make their appearance so easily.

It seems that certain beings in the past have during very long periods labored and suffered very much for this, and endured a great deal which perhaps they even need not have endured.

They labored and suffered only in order that we might now have all this and use it for our welfare.

And all this they did, either consciously or unconsciously, just for us, that is to say, for beings quite unknown and entirely indifferent to them.

And now not only do we not thank them, but we do not even know a thing about them, but take it all as in the natural order, and neither ponder nor trouble ourselves about this question at all. . .

And so, my dear and kind Grandfather, now that . . . I have gradually, with all my presence, become aware of all this, there has arisen in me, side by side with this, the need to make clear to my Reason why I personally have all the comforts which I now use, and what obligations I am under for them.<sup>8</sup>

## Intentional-Suffering

One of the best means of rendering ineffective the predisposition present in your nature of the crystallization of the consequences of the properties of the organ Kundabuffer is 'intentional-suffering'; and the greatest intentional-suffering can be obtained in your presences if you compel yourselves to be able to endure the 'displeasing-manifestations-of-others-toward-yourselves.'<sup>9</sup>

## A Simple Secret

In the common presence of every being existing merely on the basis of Itoklanoz, 'something' similar to the regulator in a mechanical watch is present and is called 'Iransamkeep'; this 'something' means: 'not - to - give - oneself - up - to - those - of - one's - associations - resulting - from - the - functioning - of - only - one - or - another - of - one's - brains.'

But even if they should understand such a simple secret it will be all just the same; they still would not make the necessary being-effort, quite accessible even to the contemporary beings and thanks to which, by the foresight of Nature, beings in general acquire the possibility of what is called 'harmonious association,' by virtue of which alone energy is created for active being-existence in the presence of every three-brained being and consequently in them themselves.<sup>10</sup>

## **The Disease ‘Tomorrow’**

Thanks to this abnormal hope of theirs a very singular and most strange disease, with a property of evolving, arose and exists among them there even until now—a disease called there ‘tomorrow.’

This strange disease ‘tomorrow’ brought with it terrifying consequences, and particularly for those unfortunate three-brained beings there who chance to learn and to become categorically convinced with the whole of their presence that they possess some very undesirable consequences for the deliverance from which they must make certain efforts, and which efforts moreover they even know just how to make, but owing to this maleficent disease ‘tomorrow’ they never succeed in making these required efforts.<sup>11</sup>

### **Abnormally Established Conditions**

I wish to point out to you one great ‘secret’ of their psyche. . .

You, no doubt, my boy, have already guessed that by this secret of their psyche I refer just to this same, as I called it, ‘psycho-organic-need’ of theirs to ‘teach others sense’ and ‘to put them on the right road.’

This special property formed in their psyche, thanks of course also always to the same abnormally established conditions of ordinary being-existence, becomes as it were—when each of them already becomes a responsible being—an obligatory part of his presence.

Everyone there without exception has this ‘psycho-organic need’; old and young, men and women and even those whom they call ‘prematurely born.’

The mentioned ‘particular need’ of theirs arises in them, in its turn, thanks to another particular property of theirs which is that from the very moment when each of them acquires the capacity of distinguishing between ‘wet’ and ‘dry,’ then, carried away by this attainment, he ceases forever to see and observe his own abnormalities and defects, but sees and observes those same abnormalities and defects in others. . .

I might as well here remark that thanks to this property of your favorites always to grow indignant at the defects of others around them, they make their existence, already wretched and abnormal without this, objectively unbearable.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Snake Who Wanted To Become a Monk**

During one meal, Monsieur Gurdjieff told us the story of a snake who wanted to take religious vows:

In the middle of a forest a man-eating snake saw a monk coming along a path. He went to meet the monk to ask if it was possible for him to take religious vows.

After listening to him, the monk said, “Yes, but if you take religious vows, you will no longer be able to eat men, or attack them!”

The snake promised to obey his instructions.

So, the monk gave the snake some advice, told him how to pray, and said to him, “In one year I will come this way again, and we’ll see how you are getting on,” and he went on his way.

One year later, the monk came back through the same forest. He saw the snake coming towards him. But the snake was emaciated, and covered in wounds. The monk asked him what had happened.

The snake replied that having kept to his promise of no longer attacking men, these men and children had started to throw stones at him.

“I see!” said the monk. “Yes! yes! I certainly asked you not to attack people, but I didn’t forbid you to hiss!”<sup>13</sup>

### **The Foundation of Essence**

Your weeping gives me the assurance also that in your future responsible existence there will also be in your common presence those being-data which are the foundation of the essence of every bearer of Divine Reason and which are even formulated by our COMMON FATHER in words placed over the chief entrance of the holy planet Purgatory decreeing the following: ‘ONLY - HE - MAY - ENTER - HERE - WHO - PUTS - HIMSELF - IN - THE - POSITION - OF - THE - OTHER - RESULTS - OF - MY - LABORS.’<sup>14</sup>

### **A Real Man**

I also very well remember that on another occasion the father dean [Borsh] said:

“In order that at responsible age a man may be a real man and not a parasite, his education must without fail be based on the following ten principles.

“From early childhood there should be instilled in the child:

- Belief in receiving punishment for disobedience.
- Hope of receiving reward only for merit.
- Love of God—but indifference to the saints.
- Remorse of conscience for the ill-treatment of animals.
- Fear of grieving parents and teachers.
- Fearlessness toward devils, snakes and mice.
- Joy in being content merely with what one has.
- Sorrow at the loss of the goodwill of others.
- Patient endurance of pain and hunger.
- The striving early to earn one’s bread.”<sup>15</sup>

### **Emerging from Hell**

My ladder was some sixty feet in length; I had not climbed up a third of its height before I emerged from that hell. There above was a beautiful starry and moonlit sky, silence and a stillness such as is rarely found even at home in Eastern Persia. Below,



there still reigned something unimaginable; I had the impression of standing on some high cliff on a sea-coast overlooking the most terrible storm and upheaval. . .

It has been shown that the sand-filled atmosphere has a definite and not very high limit, and that the contours of it's upper surface always correspond to the contours of the desert itself; and one must admit that it is absolutely necessary to make use of this discovery in the journey we have ahead of us.<sup>16</sup>

### **Our Repertoire of Roles**

You must realize that each man has a definite repertoire of roles which he plays in ordinary circumstances. He has a role for every kind of circumstance in which he ordinarily finds himself in life; but put him into even only slightly different circumstances and he is unable to find a suitable role and *for a short time he becomes himself*. The study of the roles a man plays represents a very necessary part of self-knowledge. Each man's repertoire is very limited. And if a man simply says 'I' and 'Ivan Ivanich,' he will not see the whole of himself because 'Ivan Ivanich' also is not one; a man has at least five or six of them. One or two for his family, one or two at his office (one for his subordinates and another for his superiors), one for friends in a restaurant, and perhaps one who is interested in exalted ideas and likes intellectual conversation. And at different times the man is fully identified with one of them and is unable to separate himself from it. To see the roles, to know one's repertoire, particularly to know its limitedness, is to know a great deal. But the point is that, outside his repertoire, a man feels very uncomfortable should something push him if only temporarily out of his rut, and he tries his hardest to return to any one of his usual roles. Directly he falls back into the rut, everything at once goes smoothly again and the feeling of awkwardness and tension disappears. This is how it is in life; but in the work, in order to observe oneself, one must become reconciled to this awkwardness and tension and to the feeling of discomfort and helplessness. Only by experiencing this discomfort can a man really observe himself. And it is clear why this is so. When a man is not playing any of his usual roles, when he cannot find a suitable role in his repertoire, he feels that he is undressed. He is cold and ashamed and wants to run away from everybody. But the question arises: What does he want? A quiet life or to work on himself?<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kathryn Hulme, *Undiscovered Country: A Spiritual Adventure*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1966, p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> G. I. Gurdjieff, *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*, New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1950, p. 1209.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 372–373.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 194–195.

<sup>5</sup> The director's principal task was to direct the 'toasts' ceremony during the meal.

<sup>6</sup> Transcript from a Paris Meeting led by Gurdjieff, 1943.

<sup>7</sup> G. I. Gurdjieff, *Views From The Real World*, New York: Dutton, 1973, pp. 148–151.

<sup>8</sup> *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*, pp. 76–77.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 241–242.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 445.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 362.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 1075–1077.

<sup>13</sup> Solange Claustres, *Becoming Conscious with G. I. Gurdjieff*, Netherlands: [Eureka Editions](#), 2005, p. 69.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 1164.

<sup>15</sup> G. I. Gurdjieff, *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, New York: Dutton, 1963, p. 57.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 171–172.

<sup>17</sup> P. D. Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous*, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1949, p. 239–240.

## Sayings of Gurdjieff

1. It is better to be temporarily selfish than never to be just.  
Only *conscious* suffering is of value.  
Man is given a limited quantity of experiences; being economical with them lengthens his life.
2. Know that this house is of value only to those who have recognized their nothingness and believe it is possible to alter.  
Here we can only direct and create conditions, but not help.  
Remember that here work is not done for work's sake, but as a means.  
Like what *it* does not like.
3. Conscious love evokes the same in response.  
Emotional love evokes the opposite.  
Physical love depends on type and polarity.  
  
Faith of consciousness is freedom.  
Faith of feeling is slavery.  
Faith of body is stupidity.  
  
Hope of consciousness is strength.  
Hope of feeling is cowardice.  
Hope of body is disease.
4. Only he can be impartial who is able to put himself into the position of others.  
We can only strive to be able to be Christians.  
I love him who loves work.  
Judge others according to yourself and you will seldom be mistaken.
5. Consider what others think of you, not what they say.  
If you are not critical by nature, it is useless for you to remain here.  
He who has got rid of the disease 'Tomorrow' has the possibility to attain what he is here for.
6. If you already know what is wrong and do it, you commit a sin that is difficult to redress.

The chief means of happiness in this life is the ability to consider outwardly always, inwardly never.

7. One of the strongest motives for the wish to work on yourself is the realization that you may die at any moment—only you must first realize this.  
Man is refreshed not by the quantity but by the quality of sleep—sleep little without regret.
8. The highest that a man can attain is to be able to *do*.
9. Here there are neither English nor Russians, Jews nor Christians, but only those following one aim, to be able to be.
10. Take the understanding of the East and the knowledge of the West and then seek.  
Only he who can take care of the property of others can have his own.
11. Remember yourself always and everywhere.
12. A good man loves his father and mother.  
Help him only who strives not to be an idler.  
Love not art with your feelings.  
Respect all religions.  
Judge no one according to the tales of others.
13. Blessed is he who hath a soul,  
Blessed is he who hath none,  
Woe and sorrow to him who hath it in conception.
14. The worse the conditions of life, the greater the possibility for productive work, provided you work consciously.  
The energy expended in active inner work is immediately transformed into new energy; that expended in passive work is lost forever.  
Practice love on animals first; they react better and more sensitively.

- There is only one kind of magic and this is ‘doing.’
- All energy spent on conscious work is an investment; that spent mechanically is lost forever.
- We must destroy our buffers. Children have none; therefore we must become like little children.
- We attract forces according to our being.
- Humanity is the earth’s nerve-endings through which planetary vibrations are received for transmission.
- Everything in the universe has a place in a scale.
- No energy is ever lost in the cosmic scheme.
- One twentieth of all our energy goes to emotional and instinctive centres. Self-remembering is a lamp which must be kept alight by energy from these two centres. Our thinking centre is not really a centre, but an apparatus for collecting impressions.
- Formatory apparatus resembles a hired typist who works for a firm and has a large number of stereotyped replies for external impressions. She sends printed replies to other centres who are the ‘directors’ of the firm and who are strangers to each other. Wrong replies are often sent, as the typist is asleep or lazy.
- In deep sleep all communication between centres is closed. Our sleep is bad because we do not cut off lines of communication.
- We have good and bad angels. The good angels work by way of our voluntary, active nature and the bad through our passive nature.

- Mr. Self-love and Madame Vanity are the two chief agents of the devil.
- Do not be affected by externals. In themselves they are harmless; it is we who allow ourselves to be hurt by them.
- We never reach the limits of our strength.
- If we do what we like doing, we are immediately rewarded by the pleasure of doing it. If we do what we don't like doing the reward must come later. It is a mathematical law and all life is mathematics.
- Man is a symbol of the laws of creation; in him there is evolution, involution, struggle, progress and retrogression, struggle between positive and negative, active and passive, yes and no, good and evil.
- Men have their minds and women their feelings more highly developed. Either alone can give nothing. Think what you feel and feel what you think. Fusion of the two produces another force.
- For some people religion is useful but for others it is only a policeman.
- We are sheep kept to provide wool for our masters who feed us and keep us as slaves of illusion. But we have a chance of escape and our masters are anxious to help us, but we like being sheep. It is comfortable.
- He who can love can *be*; he who can *be* can *do*; he who can *do* is.
- Sincerity is the key to self-knowledge and to be sincere with oneself brings great suffering.
- Sleep is very comfortable, but waking is very bitter.
- Free will is the function of the Master within us. Our 'will' is the supremacy of one desire over another.
- Eastern art has a mathematical basis. It is a script with an inner and an outer content. In Persia there is a room in a monastery which makes one weep owing to mathematical combinations of different parts of its architecture. Real art is knowledge and not talent.
- An ordinary man has no 'Master.' He is ruled now by the mind, now by the feelings and now by the body. Often the order comes from the automatic apparatus and still more often he is ordered about by the sex centre. Real will can only be when one 'I' rules, when there is a 'master' in the house.
- Morality is a stick with two ends; it can be turned this way and that.
- From the time when man began to live on the Earth, from the time of Adam onwards, there started to be formed within him, with the help of God, of Nature, and of all his surroundings, an organ whose function is conscience. Every man has this organ, and whoever is guided by it automatically lives according to God's commandments. If our consciences were clear, and not buried, there would be no need to speak about morality, for consciously or unconsciously everyone would behave according to God's commandments. Unfortunately conscience is covered up with a kind of crust which can be pierced only by intense suffering; then conscience speaks. But after a while a man calms down and once more the organ becomes covered over and buried.
- You should forget about morality. Conversations about morality are simply empty talk. Your aim is *inner morality*.
- External morality is different everywhere.
- You should understand, and establish it as a firm rule, not to pay attention to other people's opinions. You must be free of people surrounding you, and when you are free inside you will be free of them.
- To be just at the moment of action is a hundred times more valuable than to be just afterwards.

- To gain anything real, long practice is necessary. Try to accomplish very small things first.
- There are two kinds of doing—automatic and doing what you ‘wish.’ Take a small thing which you ‘wish’ to do and cannot do and make this your God. Let nothing interfere. If you ‘wish,’ you can. Without wishing you never ‘can.’ ‘Wish’ is the most powerful thing in the world.
- To bear the manifestation of others is a big thing. The last thing for a man.
- In the river of life suffering is not intentional. In conscious life suffering is intentional and of great value.
- To love one must first forget all about love. Make it your aim and look for direction. As we are we cannot possibly love.
- Until a man uncovers himself he cannot see.

## Talks and Writings of Gurdjieff’s Pupils

### Between Two Mysteries

The activities of everyone here, in this microcosm, seem to reflect what is going on all over the world. I was sitting this morning and picturing to myself the life on this planet: people going here and there, responding to all of life’s necessities, being part of an immense, uninterrupted movement of exchange, yet at the same time as though driven by what might be called the hypnosis of life—including modes of thought, beliefs, and so on—which everyone has been immersed in since childhood. And I also recalled that there are places in the world having something like large antennas directed upward, through which another action seems to take place—allowing meaning and mindfulness to enter one’s life.

But to really allow for this action, one has to stop, to make room for the sense of wonder and the appearance of a real search. Scientists today sometimes describe where we are as being in front of a double mystery: the infinitely large and the infinitely small. In between these, there is man, a third mystery, with a brain of infinite complexity. This image, perhaps, lacks the element of invitation to direct experience, and I would prefer to say that we are between two mysteries—the outer world and the inner world—and in order to be open to both of these worlds, man has to know himself, to know himself totally.<sup>1</sup>

*Michel de Salzmann*

### Out of Balance

To be out of balance is my greatest help if I only realize it and see that “I” cannot balance myself. This egoistic wish to which I cling is just the continuation of what keeps me out of balance. It needs to be understood in a new way. “I” cannot make it myself, and as long as I stick to the wish to be balanced, the imbalance goes on.

Again, only when I am overwhelmed, when I cannot face the situation, can something entirely new appear that helps me to understand what is really needed.<sup>2</sup>

*Michel de Salzmann*

### **Waking from Our Dream**

This dream is the natural state of man. We live in this dream as we live in the air, and it would be hopeless if we were not able to realize sometimes that we live not only in this world, but also in another world, where it is possible for us to awaken to different perceptions, to another way of being, of thinking and of feeling. The act of waking up can change everything: it is to be born to another world within oneself. . .

To awaken is not to isolate oneself from the world, it is not to cut ourselves off from the ensemble of relationships with which we are called to exist. Very much the contrary: this awakening is a broadening, an enrichment. It is the possibility of living at the same time on different levels, of facing the demands of several levels simultaneously: That is not a *minus*, it is a *plus*.<sup>3</sup>

*Henri Tracol*

### **Your Animal Is Law-Able**

Again and again he [Gurdjieff] stressed the importance of remembering our exercises, of doing them daily no matter where we would be or in what condition. “Not *once* will you do them,” he said, “not one hundred times will you do them . . . but *one thousand and one times* you will do, and *then* perhaps something will happen. Now it is imagination, but sooner or later it will be *fact*, because your animal is *law-able*.”<sup>4</sup>

*Kathryn Hulme*

### **“Stay in Front!”**

Madame de Salzmann came to the day of work at the Maison and went to all the places—the kitchen, the sewing room, the movements hall, the library and the workshop. It appears as if she wishes to authenticate all things, all activities and to affirm all those who take responsibility. The work is all this but, she says, “At the same time, what is most important is the connection with higher energy. And when one is not related, one must stay in front of the lack of connection. Stay in front of whatever is taking place: stay in front of your connection or the lack of it. Stay in front.”

I feel that ‘*Restez devant!*’, ‘Stay in front!’, is the *mantra* which Madame de Salzmann is giving us. It needs to be constantly kept in mind.

Madame de Salzmann came to the workshop where there was a great deal of noise from the saws and the drills. I was struggling with a large piece of wood on the table saw. She came close to me and smiled. Over the din, she said loudly, “Do you see it is the same here as in the sitting?”<sup>5</sup>

*Jeanne de Salzmann*  
(recounted by Ravi Ravindra)

### **The Aim of a Koan**

The aim of [a] Koan is to enable the pupil to resolve what the mind cannot resolve. There is the ability to be engaged very actively in life, but at the same time to be non-attached. One does what one does with full enthusiasm: I love to drink coffee, to paint, to dig a garden or chop wood. But can I be wholly in the act but not attached to it? And at the same time, be in relation to this “other,” this stillness, which is in me, in you, in everything. This requires discipline, which one reaches through various methods. It’s not only meditation, and it certainly isn’t through scholastic studies or through prayer of the ordinary kind, although prayer can be a cessation of thought, a giving up, a letting go and being here totally. Now, perhaps, to be that way does require a great preliminary doing; I’m not sure about that. As an old man who has been through a lot of that sort of practice, I don’t think it’s really necessary. I don’t see the sense of it now. I think if I were in the hands of a master today, he would simply tell me, “Look, mister, just be still. Watch your breathing. Get your center of gravity down here.” And then this appears. This is in you, it’s always here. All one has to do is open to it. So I don’t see the sense of all these schools and all these disciplines. I do see the sense, because one is unable, one is not capable as one is, in ordinary life.<sup>6</sup>

*William Segal*

### **Work in Everyday Life**

Thank you for your letter describing your attempts to make a practical work in your everyday life. They all seem to be positive and well directed.

You are right to work in several directions at once; life is too short to take only one study at a time. To the ones you enumerate you might add: to observe your postures and gestures—which often help to know your inner state, because they often reflect it, as well as aspects of personality.

While you take several studies at once, make one your *special* study or task, for one or two weeks—then another one; this way you refresh your interest in new discovery.

Try to be clear for yourself on *your own personal impulse*, your personal wish and aim; no one else can give you theirs.

Some reading, as you mention, is good; but do not read too much—you yourself are the book to study—everything is there.<sup>7</sup>

*Christopher Fremantle*

### **We Are on a Spaceship**

We are on a spaceship; we are traveling with Beelzebub, his kinsman, the captain of the ship, and old Ahoon and Hassein. These are Godlike beings, in a sense, relative to

us. This is important—to get this understanding. While we are traveling, we are discussing and being educated by Beelzebub . . . who is one of the great observers, one of the great beings, one of the highest beings in the universe.

What is important is that being on this ship as mere human beings exalts in us the recognition of our humanity, and it gives us a handle by which we can have evaluation both of ourselves, and also of others like ourselves. . . The spaceship is not a fantasy, not something that we imagine. It is a reality in the sense that it exists in this way—for the purpose of enabling us to study and observe under guidance of the greatest of all possible observers.<sup>8</sup>

*Paul Anderson*

### **What is Work?**

I am going to talk this morning about a subject which is appropriate for the New Year and that is Work. We use this word and, I suppose, slowly the greatness of it begins to dawn on us. We use it in various ways. We use it as a verb to say: “I work” or “I wish to work” or “I don’t know how to work” and we use it also as a noun when we talk about “the Work.” And when we use it as a noun we sometimes just refer to this general activity that we expect—or hope—will bring us to the goal we are all seeking. Sometimes we also use it, and rightly so, as a something to which we belong in which we have a place. So ever since this word Work came into our vocabulary we have spoken about being “in the Work,” or “belonging to the Work.” But we have also noticed over the years that it is unfortunately possible also to take this word in these ways: of assuming that people who do things such as coming to these meetings, or doing various exercises, are superior to others because of that; and then make a distinction between people who are “in the Work” and people who are “not in the Work”—and even talk about people who have “left the Work” with sadness!

But what does it really mean? . . .

Work isn’t just an abstract idea, or a process, or an activity, or something like that. Work is my home, my reality. Everything that is of real value I find in it: wife, children, friends, interests, studies, everything. All are “in the Work.” . . . It is the most intimate reality. It is the reality of our innermost self. When we find ourselves, we find that.<sup>9</sup>

*John Bennett*

### **Little by Little**

To separate from the associative level, we have to contact finer energies. The higher part of the head is full of fine energy—there, there is silence—no words there—no struggle.

Where the feeling of myself connects with the finer energies, they become concentrated. This energy must never be used for anything other than my inner world. The outer world does not need it.



Little by little, and it is a long process, I keep some of these finer energies. I collect them and try not to pour them out. Then they may crystallize and they cannot become mixed with coarse energies. It is slow, patience is needed, and it is the only way to a change in the centre of gravity.<sup>10</sup>

*Henriette Lannes*

### **A Point of Reference**

Each individual cell—with its nucleus, protoplasm and membrane—is a structure. Similarly with each individual person, our centers are part of a cosmic structure and they are the means of transmission of a descending higher order.

Our essence is born of the stars and is at the level of ‘all suns.’ From that level there is a transmission to our centers, which in turn creates our functions; and our functions create forms.

Contrary to what is generally accepted as fact, human beings have a cosmic origin and that origin descends into our functioning. Our centers receive the energy that needs to be transmitted through them. Through the centers, we can receive this energy. If we could look at the stars and forgo our usual self-centered perspective of seeing them as separate from us, and instead see ourselves as an integral part of the whole structure, we would be more able to understand the purpose of our centers and of ourselves.

This is the idea of incarnation: the ray of creation becomes embodied. It incarnates in our centers, and, as a result, the centers become a means of cosmic transmission. Without this global vision it is difficult to have a direction. This idea constitutes a point of reference that imparts orientation and direction to my search. This broader perspective allows me to learn about my functions without attachment to them, an attachment that arises when I do not look from a place that is higher.<sup>11</sup>

*Michel Conge*

### **How Serious Am I?**

I think I wish something in a certain direction, but how serious am I? I was at Chartres this summer where I felt so powerfully the quality of feeling that was necessary to produce what I saw there. It has an effect on even the most frivolous of people. What was necessary, even possible, at that time? What is possible for us now?

How could we be as serious in trying to reach the mystery that exists in all of us as they were at that moment, when Chartres was constructed? It still vibrates today. If there is something serious in you which corresponds, it is set in motion. I wish at this moment to be as serious as they were. They left evidence that can still touch us if we are not too covered over with theories. I recognize that I am not serious now or even most of the time. To me it is such an extraordinary thing that a Way exists in which one does not have to leave one’s life. But is life only a distraction? And how can I strengthen the wish to be serious? . . .

Part of my work is to make my way in the real world, as we call it. We are on the earth; we are earth beings and have to make our way here. How do we go about that? If I wish to build a cathedral in myself it has to be on this earth.<sup>12</sup>

Louise Welch

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<sup>1</sup> Michel de Salzman, *Material for Thought, No. 14*, San Francisco: Far West Editions, 1995, pp. 12–13.

<sup>2</sup> *On the Way to Self Knowledge*, edited by Jacob Needleman and Dennis Lewis, New York: Knopf, 1976, p. 77.

<sup>3</sup> Henri Tracol, *The Taste For Things That Are True*, Rockport, MA: Element, 1994, p. 83.

<sup>4</sup> Kathryn Hulme, *Undiscovered Country: A Spiritual Adventure*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1966, pp. 106–107.

<sup>5</sup> Ravi Ravindra, *Heart Without Measure*, Halifax: Shaila Press, 1999, p. 153. A new paperback edition with some additional material is also available from Morning Light Press, Sandpoint, ID, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> William Segal, *Opening: Collected Writings of William Segal, 1985–1997*, New York: Continuum, 1999, p. 114.

<sup>7</sup> A letter to a pupil from Christopher Fremantle's, *On Attention: Talks, Essays, and Letters to His Pupils*, edited by Lillian Firestone Boal, Denville, NJ: Indications Press, 1993, p. 165.

<sup>8</sup> From an unpublished talk of Paul Anderson titled, "Comments on the Fourth Sojourn and the Fifth Flight of Beelzebub," Conway, MA, August 14, 1977.

<sup>9</sup> John G. Bennett, *Sunday Talks at Coombe Springs*, Santa Fe, NM: Bennett Books, 2004, pp. 305–307.

<sup>10</sup> Henriette Lannes, *Inside a Question*, London: Paul H. Crompton Ltd, 2002, p. 201.

<sup>11</sup> Ricardo Guillon, *Record of a Search: Working with Michel Conge in France*, Toronto: Traditional Studies Press, 2004, pp. 73–74.

<sup>12</sup> From the unpublished transcript of a meeting with Louise Welch in Toronto, September 27, 1975.