INNER WORK PRINCIPLES II

Self-Observation

The principal method of self-study and self-knowledge is *self-observation*. By observing the human functions – thinking, feeling, instinctive-moving – it is possible to come to an objective understanding of our inner and outer life. Gurdjieff stressed that at first self-observation is concerned with simply registering or 'recording' what is happening in our body and mind at a particular moment. Only later is analysis of the observed phenomena possible: "When a certain number of 'records' have been accumulated and when, at the same time, laws to a certain extent have been studied and understood, analysis becomes possible . . . But it is necessary to begin from the beginning. A man must begin observing himself as though he did not know himself at all, as though he had never observed himself." (1)

Self-observation reveals many aspects of ourselves that we had formerly ignored, especially our susceptibility to external influences and stimuli: "By observing in yourself the appearance and the disappearance of consciousness you will inevitably see one fact which you neither see nor acknowledge now, and that is that moments of consciousness are very short and are separated by long intervals of completely unconscious mechanical working of the 'machine.' You will then see that you can think, feel, act, speak, work, *without being conscious of it*." In talks to his Russian students, Gurdjieff emphasized this important point in stark words:

> While he observes himself, a man will record a whole series of very important aspects of his being. To begin with he will record with unmistakable clearness the fact that his actions, thoughts, feelings, and words are the result of external influences and that nothing comes from himself. He will understand and see that he is in fact an automaton acting under the influences of external stimuli. He will feel his complete mechanicalness. Everything 'happens,' he cannot 'do' anything. He is a machine controlled by accidental shocks from outside. Each shock calls to the surface one of his I's. A new shock and that I disappears and a different one takes its place. Another small change in the environment and again, there is a new I. A man will begin to understand that he has no control of himself whatever . . . He will understand that his actions are entirely controlled by external conditions and he will be convinced that there is nothing permanent in him from which control could come, not a single permanent function, not a single permanent state. (2)

Self-observation is a mirror which shows us as we really are, not as we think we are. The first step in the process of awakening is to realize that we spend most of our life in a state of 'waking sleep.' By observing ourselves in the activities of daily life we can verify the reality of this mechanical state of consciousness. One of the consequences of impartial self-observation is the realization that we are not unified; we have many I's and

consequently have virtually no control over our thoughts, feelings and actions: we have no stable attention or awareness.

The greatest challenge in observing oneself is to be honest, objective and impersonal. When the observation of our inner states and outer manifestations is impartial, without judgmental interpretations or excuses, we can more accurately obtain a true picture of who we really are. Gurdjieff: "Before beginning to study our mechanicalness and all the principles for a correctly conducted self-observation, we must decide, once and forever, that we will be sincere with ourselves unconditionally, will shut our eyes to nothing, shun no results wherever they may lead one and not be limited by any previous, self-imposed limits." (3)

> The first step toward knowing oneself is the realized admission that one does not know oneself. The key to this whole problem is sane objectivity. The subtlety of this undertaking and its difficulty cannot be overstated; at every turn one will misinterpret what one sees and the constant falsity of one's ingrained, subjective image of oneself will distort what is plainly in front of one's eyes. To see what can easily be seen, is not so hard; but the way in which it is seen, *how* it is seen, that is the secret. The very first step in this method is to look upon oneself as upon a stranger, literally, for a stranger to oneself is what one truly is. A scientist in a laboratory investigating some hitherto unknown specimen is not afraid of what he may find, his motive is a controlled curiosity nor has he any axe to grind in favor or opposed to some subjective judgment or predetermined outcome. He wants to find out, he looks in order to discover what is: objectivity, objectivity, objectivity. (4)

The emphasis at the beginning of self-observation is on direct perception without criticism, analysis (5) or attempting to change what is being observed. Observation means to notice, to be conscious of, to be aware of one's inner state and outer behaviour. Only later, as the practice matures, is viable analysis or real inner change possible.

The very practice of self-observation can trigger intellectual commentary and analysis or emotional reaction. "You need to observe simply, because if you try to analyze it is mostly based on previous notions about yourself. You don't take in a pure impression of what is happening. For a moment one can stand aside and impersonally experience what is happening, but very quickly and imperceptibly observation changes into comment, and comment into emotional reaction to what one has observed. And the moment the observation changes into comment, one has lost the pure impression." (6)

There should be no attempt in any way to alter or interfere with what one is observing, as this removes the opportunity to observe or to experience what is actually happening, and thus learn from it: "To be aware is to simply observe impersonally and objectively. It involves no meddling with other functions and no proposal to change what is being observed, for this would defeat its own objective which is to see, not what might or should occur, but what in fact does occur." (7)

There is no doubt that it is very difficult to observe oneself impartially, without the accompanying judgments or emotional reactions of accept or reject, like or dislike, acknowledge or deny. As well, there are many internal and external distractions that interfere with objective observation. A conscious, active effort is necessary over a period of months, perhaps years, before any visible results are apparent.

The persistent and deeply ingrained habits and conditioning of the ego also make it very difficult to objectively observe ourselves. Imagination and self-justification interfere with direct seeing, so that we do not register actual *facts* about ourselves; only fantasies and erroneous self-descriptions: "Having caught a deeper glimpse of oneself, one will lose it in the uproar of self-justifying. The more you find yourself self-justifying the more certain you may be that you are lying to yourself. The 'false personality,' however, is very powerful and will maintain itself at all costs and by every method possible." (8)

Real self-knowledge is a simultaneous perception involving *all* our centers. The intellectual center works by comparing things, the emotional center is based on likes and dislikes, while the instinctive center registers pleasant and unpleasant sensations. Almost every behaviour is a blending of the various centers, although one particular center tends to predominate at any given time.

The initial objects of self-observation are typically the four primary human functions governed by the intellectual, emotional, instinctive and moving centers. Each function has its own specific characteristic. But to distinguish which function is operating in a specific observed behaviour is challenging:

> The difficulty of this kind of observation is immediately apparent: in fact, not only do we have many functions, always mixed up with each other in each situation, with one of them predominating to some degree, but also, due to our ignorance, we constantly confuse them with each other. This confusion is all the greater in that different functions may look very much alike and the same manifestations may come from different sources in us. Our observations are also complicated by the fact that our functions look very different according to the state in which we happen to be, which is constantly changing. So we have to begin by observing simple situations in which a single, easily recognizable function is clearly dominant, allowing us to experience directly its source in ourselves. Eventually, with experience, it becomes easier to recognize in oneself the interplay of the functions and even to have, in a given moment of presence, true flashes of self-remembering. (9)

It is easiest to study instinctive or moving center functions such as postures and gestures (10). Our thoughts and emotions are much more difficult to observe objectively without identification, reaction or misinterpretation. Self-observation is most productive when it is grounded or rooted in the experience of the body: "Becoming consciously embodied in physical reality . . . creates the basis for real self-observation. Observing

one's 'I-of-the-moment' with the intent of observing impartially can lead to the being and self-knowledge which comprise genuine understanding." (11)

The observation of one's thoughts, emotions, sensations and actions require a special effort of attention – a division of attention into two parts. One part is directed toward whatever activity is being engaged in (the outer field of awareness) and the other part is directed inward to the experience of a point of awareness ('the silent witness'). However, maintaining this dual directed attention is very difficult:

> One of the great difficulties of maintaining this special kind of attention is that when one is for a moment aware of something, one immediately starts thinking about it, judging it. And one's sense of oneself slips into these feelings, these judgments of it, and one is lost. The Silent Witness is no longer there . . . You are tempted the whole time to react to what you observe, but the moment you do that you are no longer observing. And experience shows that it is extremely difficult not to react. A running commentary sets up, or one is pleased that one has noticed something, or one is disgusted with what one has seen. These reactions draw one's attention away from the naked experience of oneself. (12)

Real self-observation must be conscious, not mechanical or associative. And it is impossible to observe oneself continuously. However, it is always possible to observe oneself at any particular point in time if we *remember* to do it. This is the key: we cannot observe ourself if we do not remember ourself. Change of being requires conscious effort. Jeanne de Salzmann: "What can change in me is the awareness of myself, and self-observation only brings results if it is related to the aim of consciousness . . . Being is always working in us, trying to break through the hard crust of our ego into the light of consciousness. The primordial impetus animating human will is the striving of being toward this light. If we repeat unceasingly our efforts it is to learn to let the reality of Being emerge." (13)

The very process of self-observation has a transformative effect on our normal state of being and expands our consciousness to encompass higher actualities and possibilities. John Pentland: "As soon as the work is placed in the framework of self-observation, of simply observing what is going on – what can resist that? What I see may not please me, it may not be what I think I ought to see, but that is exactly why the approach to the work is possible, and how a change can be theoretically and practically conceivable, because it simply takes place through awareness of what is." (14) Self-knowledge and inner change happen naturally as the attention is brought to bear on what is observed:

> Self-study and self-observation, if rightly conducted, brings man to the realization of the fact that something is wrong with his machine and with his functions in their ordinary state. It is precisely for this reason that the vast majority of his possibilities remain unrealized, the vast majority of his powers are left unused . . . The idea of self-study acquires in his eyes a new meaning. He sees every function as it is now and as it could be or ought to

> be. Self-observation brings man to the realization of the necessity for self-change. And in observing himself a man notices that self-observation itself brings about certain changes in his inner processes. He begins to understand that self-observation is an instrument of self-change, a means of awakening. By observing himself he throws, as it were, a ray of light onto his inner processes which have hitherto worked in compete darkness. And under the influence of this light the processes themselves begin to change. (15)

The very act of impartial observation changes our thoughts, feelings and actions by revealing the largely unconscious structure of our psychological being and the habits and conditioning that support it. In *The Reality of Being*, Jeanne de Salzmann speaks of the power of "actual fact" in the transformational process: "This experience of fact can never be mechanical or approached with an opinion or a judgment. Fact teaches us . . . Only consciousness of fact will bring understanding, consciousness without choice, consciousness of every thought and feeling, of their motive and operation." (16)

> The transformation of my consciousness will come about only through the way of pure vision, which changes me entirely, as though by a miracle. In seeing from moment to moment what I am, I abandon all that I pretend to be. Everything is engaged in this – my emotions, my thought, my body – each intensely active. It is under these conditions that seeing appears. An energy is liberated that alone gives me the force to look deep in myself and not turn away, not stop. What is most important for me is *to see*, to see without the reaction of my memory and regardless of what I see. Whatever the fact – ambition, jealousy, refusal – the act of seeing it reveals an enormous power. As the fact itself blossoms, there is understanding not only of the fact but of the action that seeing produces – the change in my consciousness. The very act of seeing brings this change, and the truth of what I see transforms my attitude toward life. Consciousness opens – I see. I see reality, and this becomes all powerful for me. I have an emotional understanding of truth. (17)

Gurdjieff's teachings are intended to foster a more conscious engagement with the world through greater self-understanding and acknowledgment of our place and purpose in the cosmos. Jacob Needleman: "The work of 'self-observation' acquires a completely new meaning as the development of attention lets go of its effort, joining and willingly submitting to a higher conscious seeing. In this new relationship of individual attention and a higher impersonal consciousness, a man or woman can become a vessel, serving another energy which can act through the individual." (18)

> To be able to work in life in the full sense, would be considered a very high achievement. The struggle to be "present" in everyday life constitutes a major aspect of Gurdjieff's teaching, a struggle which leads to a full engagement in the duties and rewards of human life, now and here. In this context, Gurdjieff created conditions to help his pupils experience the fundamental practice of self-observation. Through such experiences, a man or woman can begin to come into contact with an ever-deepening sense of inner need which allows an opening to a powerful conscious influence within oneself.

> According to Gurdjieff, without a relationship to this more central aspect of oneself, everyday life is bound to be an existential prison, in which the individual is held captive not so much by the so-called forces of modernity as by the parts of the self which cannot help but react automatically to the influences of the world. The help offered by the special conditions of the work is therefore understood not as replacing our life in the world, but as enabling us, in the course of time, to live life with authentic understanding and full participation. (19)

Conscious Effort and Struggle

Certain qualities are required for an effective search for self-knowledge and fruitful work on oneself: sincerity, intensity and focus, seriousness of attitude, determination and persistence, right intention and patience. In *This Fundamental Quest*, Henriette Lannes expands on these necessary qualities:

> All inner work requires from us quiet preparations, perhaps followed by engagement with a task. When we engage, we must learn to take into account the presence of three different factors. There is within us a force of affirmation sustained by the active attention that awakened during our preparation. This force very quickly encounters another force, coming from our fears and passivity, which opposes it. And at an unexpected moment, we may know the taste of presence to ourselves that mysteriously links the first two forces. When the moment comes to apply ourselves to tasks, can we engage all of our intelligence to experience again the quality of attention that animated us during our preparation for the day? If we fail to take into account all of these very real factors, we will *forget everything* and lose the benefits of work, which is the sole valid reason for our coming into this world. The challenge is difficult – but if it were a question of our health, for example, we would find the necessary impetus. "Assembling the conditions for this work is a test of the genuineness of your appreciation." (Gurdjieff) . . . Certain outer conditions make it impossible to pursue our inner quest, while other conditions – even if difficult – make it more possible. Each of us must discover the life conditions that permit us to remember the need to open at one and the same time to ourselves and to the world at large. (20)

The Work requires a certain degree of discipline and obedience to the structure imposed by a teacher for both individual and group work. The aspirant must recognize the need for right conditions, guided instruction and help, obedience, interactions with other pupils, and even the necessity for payment. These must be accepted, without rancor or resistance, at the very start of the journey of self-study and inner development. And it must be a genuine acceptance rooted in the acknowledgment of one's own current state of understanding and development.

Gurdjieff counseled his students always to remember their aim and to work with dedication and focus: “Time is precious and should not be wasted on things which have no direct relation to your task. Remember where you are and why you are here. Do not spare yourself and remember that no effort is made in vain.” (21)

The Work begins with the struggle between accidental happening and intentional doing, between dreams and illusions or conscious awareness, between distraction and directed attention. In his Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man, Gurdjieff provided a foundation for this struggle through the assignment of ‘exercises of will’ as instruments of growth: “Take some small thing you wish to do, and compel yourself to do it.” (22)

Conscious work on oneself is a complex, challenging task which simultaneously proceeds in different directions and along many channels. Many kinds of effort are necessary to navigate the path of inner development:

- Recognizing the false picture of ourselves that we are unaware of.
- Observing the mechanical I’s in oneself and not becoming lost in them.
- Being sincere and honest with oneself.
- Recognizing our ‘buffers,’ ingrained opinions and prejudices.
- Not judging one’s actions or those of others.
- Not holding inner accounts against others.
- Not identifying as opposed to self-remembering.
- Overcoming a sense of superiority.
- Acknowledging self-pity.
- Considering others and not just oneself.
- Stopping inner talking and stereotyped thinking.
- Resisting and transforming negative emotions.

In his work with Gurdjieff in Russia, P.D. Ouspensky provided a rather pessimistic and gloomy view of the challenges of working on oneself and the prospect of a real change of being:

> The more we saw and realized the complexity and the diversity of methods of work on ourselves, the clearer became for us the difficulties of the way. We saw the indispensability of great knowledge, of immense efforts, and of help such as none of us either could or had the right to count upon. We saw that even to begin work on oneself in any serious form was an exceptional phenomenon needing thousands of favorable inner and outward conditions. And the beginning gave no guarantee for the future. Each step requires an effort, each step needed help. The possibility of attaining anything seemed so small in comparison with the difficulties that many of us lost the desire to make efforts of any kind. This was an inevitable stage through which everyone passes until they have learned to understand that it is useless to think of the possibility or impossibility of big and distant achievements, and that man must value what he gets today without thinking of what he may get tomorrow. (23)

Gurdjieff stressed that the present moment is the only time in which we can attempt and actually accomplish an inner work effort. The past is only a memory and the future only a possibility. Only *now* is an actuality, a true reality. "I see that much of the effort is for the purpose of freeing oneself from displaced time. Only then can one be here, now. This 'now' is in time but it is not of time; it refers more to a quality of being. In that sense, one wishes and needs to live in eternity, freed from time. Time and imagination are very intimately connected. Action can be sacred only when it is done from the perspective of eternity, situated in the present." (24) In *Paris Meetings 1943*, Gurdjieff exhorted his pupils to focus on the present, and not dwell on the past or imagine the future:

> It is only with the present that you can repair the past and prepare the future. The future and the past do not exist without the present. The present exists for you to repair all your errors and prepare the future, that is, another life that is desirable for you. It is very important for you to feel the present. To have a present, you have to do everything possible and do the exercises. This applies to everyone, but especially to you. You have to be in the present. The past is the past, yesterday, finished; it will never come back. Tomorrow may come: a different tomorrow depends on the present today. Everything has to be done today. Forget yesterday and forget tomorrow. With today, you repair yesterday and you make it possible for yourself to do what is necessary tomorrow. (25)

Gurdjieff warned his students not to expect quick results from their inner work efforts. Discernible results will naturally come in due time, he admonished, not through imagined magical means or unrealistic hope or unconscious bargaining. "The change that does take place is frequently imperceptible, like watching a plant grow. One gets perhaps some evidence of change when one is suddenly put in a situation which one has been in before, but not for a long time, and then one may very well find that one is able to bring something new to the situation because something inside one has changed." (26)

Gurdjieff also told his students that although progress may seem to be slow, or even apparently nonexistent, that was not necessarily the case – it is through small steps that the journey begins and eventually the traveler "reaps the harvest." C.S. Nott relates an informal talk on these lines which Gurdjieff gave in New York to his American students: "Everyone when they begin in this work, wishes to do big things. If you start on big things, you will never do anything. Start on small things first. To gain anything real, long practice and much work is necessary. First try to do small things." (27)

The obstacles to awakening can be overcome by struggling with the conditioned patterns of thinking, feeling, sensing and acting which constitute the state of 'waking sleep.' Conscious inner work such as self-observation can bring these features into awareness where they can be studied and transformed. This entails a struggle with our ego or 'false personality' which is anchored in self-centered thought, negative emotion, identification, imagination, and inner considering:

> In order to observe, I have to struggle. My ordinary nature refuses self-observation. I need to prepare, to organize a struggle against the obstacle, to withdraw a little from my identification – speaking, imagining, expressing negative emotions. Conscious struggle requires choice and acceptance. It must not be my state that dictates the choice. I must choose the struggle to be present and accept that suffering will appear. There is no struggle without some suffering. Struggle is unacceptable to our lower nature: struggle upsets it . . . In going against a habit, for example, like eating or sitting in a certain way, we are not struggling to change the habit. Or in trying not to express negative emotions, we are not struggling against the emotions themselves or struggling to do away with their expression. It is a struggle with our identification, to allow the energy otherwise wasted to serve the work. We struggle not against something, we struggle *for* something. (28)

The process of inner transformation leads to a new state of consciousness and being. But this only happens through both a recognition of our conditioning and automatism, and a willingness to "pay the price" of working relentlessly to overcome our inertia and inability to change. Jeanne de Salzmann: "I have to listen to whatever appears, and in order to really listen, I must not resist. This act of listening, of being present, is a true liberation. I am aware of my reactions to everything that takes place in me. I must feel all the conditioning of the known in order to be free from it." (29)

> There is in us an essential impulse toward consciousness that comes from an innate need to realize the totality of our being, a wish leading toward the transformation of ourselves. We know this wish is in us, and at certain moments we are touched by it. But it is still not a fact for us, and our self-centered consciousness is not transformed . . . We have not accepted that in order to find the truth, we have to understand the source of our thought and our action – the ordinary "I." We always hope that something will come about all by itself, but transformation takes place only if, little by little, I give myself to its entirety. We have to pay with the effort of self-remembering and the effort of self-observation, giving up the lie of believing in ourselves for a moment of reality. This will bring a new attitude toward ourselves. The most difficult thing is to learn how to pay. We receive exactly as much as we pay. In order to feel the authority of a subtle Presence, we have to pass beyond the wall of our ego, the wall of our mental reactions from which springs the notion of "I." It is necessary to pay. Without paying, we have nothing. (30)

One of the foundations of Gurdjieff's approach to inner development is the ongoing struggle between resistance and conscious action. One of the principal means of creating a struggle between "yes" and "no" is to sacrifice something of perceived value within oneself. This generates a certain tension that fuels inner change. He likened this process to an alchemical transmutation of the 'coarse into the finer.': "Fusion, inner unity is obtained by means of 'friction,' by the struggle between 'yes' and 'no' in man. If a man lives without inner struggle, if everything happens within him without opposition, if he goes wherever he is drawn or wherever the wind blows, he will remain such as he is. But

if a struggle begins in him, then, gradually, permanent traits begin to form themselves, he begins to 'crystallize'." (31)

Will and inner force are developed by the conscious struggle between the affirming force ('yes') and the denying force ('no'). Any of the functions, or all of them simultaneously, may be fertile ground for this inner struggle. With the intellect it may be compulsive thoughts, with the feeling it may be negative emotions, and with the body, physical laziness or passivity.

The struggle between the needs and wants of the organic body and the mind or psyche provides a ready-made opportunity to produce a 'higher substance' which facilitates the development of consciousness and being. Gurdjieff aptly characterized the body as an "animal" which only wishes to satisfy its innate drives such as food, sleep, comfort and sex. It obeys different laws than the mind, which has the ability to control the body and make it obey *its* wishes. Gurdjieff: "In all conditions, in all situations, man must teach his body to be obedient. Your individuality can educate your body. He whose body dominates and takes the initiative is a nonentity. He who has made a slave of his body is intelligent . . . The more you want to command your body, the more it opposes you; and the more it opposes you, the more it gives you strength." (32)

> It is a struggle which one must reinforce voluntarily, by our work, by our will. It is this fight which exists naturally, which we must use to create a third thing, a third state different from the other two, which is the Master, which is united with something else. The task is therefore something precise which reinforces this struggle, because by struggle and only by struggle can a new possibility of being be born. For instance, my organism is in the habit of smoking. That is its need. I do not wish to smoke – I eliminate this habit. The need is always there but I refuse to satisfy it. There is a struggle, a conscious voluntary struggle which calls the third force which will be the factor – "I" – which will conciliate and make the equilibrium. The body is an animal. The psyche is a child. One must educate the one and the other. Tame the body, make it understand that it must obey, not command . . . The only possibility of creating a second body is by an accumulation of a different substance. The only aim is that everything should serve this aim. (33)

One of the misconceptions of inner work is that 'super-efforts' are constantly required to overcome the resistances and conditioning of our habitual state of 'waking sleep.' (34) Robert de Ropp: "The special form of skill involved in the Work is described by the term 'skillful means.' Inner work does not call for the kind of heavy labor needed for splitting firewood. It calls for relaxed awareness and balance like that displayed by the skillful juggler or tightrope walker." (35)

Real, effective effort has been described as a letting go, a release or relaxation from conditioned thoughts, feelings and actions. Unlike the common understanding of inner work effort – to strive or battle against some aspect of oneself – conscious effort is

characterized by an attitude of welcoming; allowing higher energies to act on oneself through free attention:

> The Work does involve great effort, but it is a very special kind of effort. This effort involves the maintenance of balance and awareness . . . Underlying the Super-effort Syndrome is a deeply rooted misunderstanding about the nature of the Work. It is quite possible for people to become identified with what they imagine to be the Work. This causes them to approach the Work in a grim and earnest spirit. They think they must demand of themselves not ordinary efforts but super-efforts. They do not understand that the Work is a game of skill to be played lightly in a spirit of detachment. For them, the Work turns into a sort of ordeal . . . The Work is not heroic and does not involve spectacular feats of daring. It is comparable to the patient, skillful exertions of one who carves and shapes some difficult material, the worker in stone or ivory. It involves repeated small efforts rather than one great effort. It involves endless patience, a willingness to start over and over again. (36)

Voluntary Suffering and Remorse of Conscience

In the Work, 'voluntary (or intentional) suffering' (referred to in *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* by the neologism 'Being-Partkdolgduty'), is the conscious effort to overcome obstacles, inner weaknesses and fears which impede inner development. He likened it to a fire which heats, cooks and crystallizes: "One must know what makes you suffer and when it is there, make use of it. Suffer by your defects, in your pride, in your egoism. Remind yourself of the aim. Without prepared suffering there is nothing, for by as much is one conscious, there is no more suffering." (37)

One form of voluntary suffering is the deliberate action to not express negative emotions such as anger, annoyance, jealousy, exasperation and so on in the face of the unpleasant manifestations or behaviour of other people, i.e., those who, in colloquial language, "push our buttons." Such an effort must be consciously directed as it goes against the grain of our normal reactive conditioning: "We are continually meeting those who, if for no other reason than type and physical polarity, are objectionable to us or provide a disagreeable interaction. A great deal of self-knowledge and a high degree of non-identification are required so as to not react mechanically . . . The sole purpose is the creation of an intense internal emotional friction within the pupil, a friction in the heat of which alterations may occur within the pupil that otherwise are unobtainable." (38)

The proper use of voluntary suffering requires sincerity, a knowledge of the process of inner transformation and a persistent, guided effort under the tutelage of a teacher. In her memoir of work with Gurdjieff, French pupil Solange Claustres describes the living experience of voluntary suffering:

> It is a conscious acceptance of one's experience of life, *to see oneself as one is*.

> It is to live one's automatic associations, negative emotions, reactions as they are happening. It is an asceticism where the ego is laid bare, without lying to oneself. It is also about learning to voluntarily put oneself in situations where you cannot but suffer from judgements and reactions of people around you. A cleansing asceticism opening up the eyes and the heart, causing masks to fall away, but tempering the soul like steel." (39)

The powerful energies associated with negative emotions can be transformed through a conscious effort and the sacrifice of those elements of the false personality that prevent 'self-perfecting.' Gurdjieff employed a colourful metaphor of the roses that often appear in Persian proverbs to remind his students that both pleasant events and adversity are part of life: "Which would you choose – all roses, roses or all thorns, thorns? One for inner life, the other for outer? If both thorns you choose, an intentional contact can be made. It had long been Gurdjieff's teaching that intentional suffering is transformative – suffering fully accepted and known in all its dimensions, physical or moral, and suffering deliberately chosen as an encounter with oneself and source of new insight." (40)

Suffering and sacrifice may turn into bitterness and distortion or may be beneficial in terms of inner growth. What distinguishes the "useful" from the "useless" is the quality of intentional acceptance which defines a transformative impulse and action. Jacob Needleman articulates this possibility in *An Unknown World*:

> There is a quality of suffering and personal sacrifice that brings about objective knowledge and understanding – itself blended with the capacity for love of mankind . . . An individual has to be willing to undergo intentionally and willingly, and usually for a considerable period of time, the kind of suffering and inner sacrifice that opens the heart in order to approach, and experience as one's own, something of the vast reaches of the unknown levels of the human mind, unknown levels of self-knowledge and knowledge of the Earth and the universal world. (41)

Gurdjieff also taught that *sincerity* was critical on the path of self-knowledge in order to truly know ourselves. But sincerity is very difficult; it requires honesty, humility and fearlessness. In *Gurdjieff's Early Talks 1914-1931,* he urged his students to remove their mask of personality in order to see their essential nature: "All people are the same, yet each is quick to see a mote in another's eye. We are all blind to our own worst faults. If a man is sincere with himself, he enters into another's position and knows that he himself is no better." (42)

> Many things are necessary for observing, the first being sincerity with oneself. And this is very difficult. It is much easier to be sincere with a friend. Man is afraid to see something bad; and if by accident, looking deep down, he sees his own bad, he sees his nothingness. We have the habit of driving away thoughts about ourselves because we feel remorse. Sincerity may be the key which will open the door through which one part can see another part. With sincerity man may look and see something. Sincerity with oneself is very difficult, for a thick crust has grown over essence. Each year man puts on a

> new mask, one after another. All this should be gradually removed – one should free oneself, uncover oneself. Until man uncovers himself, he cannot see. (43)

Another stage in the path of inner development is the awakening of *conscience*, which creates the possibility of opening to the noblest features of human life – love, hope and genuine faith. In his Institute, Gurdjieff created conditions that facilitated inner growth through the friction between conscience and the false personality. The ensuing remorse of conscience had a cleansing or healing effect: "Suffer. In that suffering you can have real happiness given by real love." (44)

He suggested an inner exercise for his students in which past events in their life were recalled and their reactions to them at the time objectively examined, revealing the automatism of their false personality, especially their 'chief feature.' In a meeting in Paris in 1943 he challenged his pupils: "Every minute lived now must serve to repair what was wrong yesterday and to prepare for what will be tomorrow. I must experience remorse for what was wrong yesterday and stay there. Only there will I find the strength necessary to act differently, the strength that will allow me, little by little, to change my being. And this must be a task for every instant." (45)

> When this impulse of self-love arises, counteract it with the remorse that you feel by remembering the painful consequences that this self-love has brought about for you and for others. Take a specific moment during the day to work at feeling remorse. Picture to yourself specific events from your past, and, as if they were like a lighted candle in front of you, concentrate on them. Be merciless with yourself. Do not let yourself be distracted. You will see that if you have a moment of sincere remorse, your state will change, and your way of being will be altered. (46)

Conscience is sometimes called 'the mirror of truth,' a sort of spiritual touchstone,' and is a function of the higher emotional center. "In its purest form, conscience is the silent voice of the *Atman*, the true Self within, and its valuation and development lead to the new, purified faculty of positive-emotions that transcends the limitations of the ordinary mind and opens the heart to a new inexpressible world where love and truth are one." (47) In *Why Can't We Be Good?*, Jacob Needleman explores the role of conscience in awakening our higher human possibilities:

> The appearance of genuine conscience in our lives breaks the heart in the unique form of sorrow known as remorse. In genuine remorse we confront the fact that we have betrayed our station as human beings. Remorse is a question of metaphysics, not a problem of psychology. Under the eye of conscience we are not simply ethical human beings who have done something wrong for which we must make restitution. There is no restitution possible for betraying our station as human beings – except the full conscious anguish of what we are. This is the opposite of the nervous anxiety that we could have done otherwise and must now do something corrective, all of which is characteristic of the widespread neurosis of guilt. In remorse, "the

> heart breaks, but the spirit rejoices" in calling man home to the consciousness of his true nature – created in him "in the beginning" – that is, eternally, outside of time, in the silence that is independent of the creation of the world. (48)

NOTES

(1) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 106.

(2) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), pp. 112-113.

(3) A. L. Staveley *Themes III* (Aurora, Oregon: Three Rivers Press,1984), pp. 70-71.

(4) C. Daly King *The Oragean Version* (Utrecht, Netherlands: Eureka Editions, 2014), p. 161.

(5) Only proper self-observation can reveal ourselves as we really are and not how we imagine ourselves to be. The *introspection* advocated by some psychological systems is inadequate in this regard. In *A Study of Gurdjieff's Teaching* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1973, pp. 26-27), Kenneth Walker elaborates on Gurdjieff's dictum:

> To know ourselves was a very ambitious aim, which could only be realized after many years of patient and painstaking self-study. He warned us against confusing self-observation as it should be carried out with the highly unprofitable occupation known by the term introspection. Introspection was very different from self-observation. What was required of us was that we should register or take note of our thoughts, emotions and sensations at the moment of their occurrence, and introspection usually meant only thinking and dreaming about ourselves. Introspection also entailed analysis and speculating about the motives behind our behaviour, but as our pictures of ourselves were, to a great extent, imaginary pictures, all this speculating and probing about in the darkness was of very little profit to anybody, so far as real self-knowledge was concerned.

(6) Hugh Brockwill Ripman *Questions and Answers Along the Way* (Washington, D.C.: Fourthway Center Press, 2009), pp. 58-59.

(7) A.R. Orage *Gurdjieff's Emissary in New York* (London: Book Studio, 2017), p. 562.

(8) Maurice Nicoll Psychological *Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff & Ouspensky 2* (London: Robinson & Watkins, 1974), p. 558.

(9) Jean Vaysse *Toward Awakening* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), pp. 81-82.

(10) Certain features of the human body and its manifestations can be objects of non-judgmental observation: posture, facial expression, tone of voice, gesture, and movements. There are also a number of secondary bodily sensations that are available for observation and self-study: temperature, pressure, pain, equilibrium, breathing and pulse-beat.

(11) William Patrick Patterson *Georgi Ivanovitch Gurdjieff: The Man, the Teaching, His Mission* (Fairfax, California: Arete Communications, 2014), p. 250.

(12) Hugh Brockwill Ripman *Questions and Answers Along the Way* (Washington, D.C.: Fourthway Center Press, 2009), p. 56.

(13) Jeanne de Salzmann *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), pp. 280-281.

(14) John Pentland *Exchanges Within* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 2004), p. 313.

(15) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), pp. 145-146.

(16) Jeanne de Salzmann *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), p. 265.

(17) Jeanne de Salzmann *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), p. 266.

(18) Jacob Needleman "The Inner Journey: Introduction" in Jacob Needleman (ed.) *The Inner Journey: Views from the Gurdjieff Work* (Sandpoint, Idaho: Morning Light Press, 2008), p. xxi.

(19) Jacob Needleman "The Inner Journey: Introduction" in Jacob Needleman (ed.) *The Inner Journey: Views from the Gurdjieff Work* (Sandpoint, Idaho: Morning Light Press, 2008), p. xx.

(20) Henriette Lannes *This Fundamental Quest* (San Francisco: Far West Institute, 2003), p. 40.

(21) G.I. Gurdjieff *Gurdjieff's Early Talks 1914-1931* (London: Book Studio, 2014), p. 92.

(22) C.S. Nott *Teachings of Gurdjieff* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974), p. 172.

(23) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 360.

(24) Ravi Ravindra *Heart Without Measure: Work with Madame de Salzmann* (Halifax: Shaila Press, 1999), p. 129.

(25) G.I. Gurdjieff *Paris Meetings 1943* (Toronto: Dolmen Meadow Editions, 2017), p. 276.

(26) Hugh Brockwill Ripman *Questions and Answers Along the Way* (Washington, D.C.: Fourthway Center Press, 2009), p. 321.

(27) C.S. Nott *Teachings of Gurdjieff* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974), p. 21.

(28) Jeanne de Salzmann *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), p. 18.

(29) Jeanne de Salzmann *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), p. 251.

(30) Jeanne de Salzmann *The Reality of Being* (Boston: Shambhala, 2010), pp. 249-250.

(31) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 32.

(32) G.I. Gurdjieff *Paris Meetings 1943* (Toronto: Dolmen Meadow Editions, 2017), p. 80.

(33) G.I. Gurdjieff *Transcripts of Gurdjieff's Meetings 1941-1946* (London: Book Studio, 2009), p. 105.

(34) During the decades since Gurdjieff's death, there was a change in the nature of the Work under the direction of Jeanne de Salzmann, with less emphasis on unrelenting efforts. In *Heart without Measure* (Halifax: Shaila Press, 1999, pp. 128-129), Ravi Ravindra, a student of de Salzmann, articulates this modification of an active effort towards a more receptive attention which facilitates opening to higher cosmic energies:

> I often feel that Madame de Salzmann is saying something new, other than what Gurdjieff brought, although there is a discernible continuity of the teaching. It seems that the emphasis now is not so much on 'effort' as on 'being available' to the higher energy . . . On the one hand, one constantly hears in the Work – especially in the writings and talks of Ouspensky and Gurdjieff – about will, effort, conscious labour, intentional undertaking and the like. On the other hand, Madame de Salzmann in particular is emphasizing being available, letting go. It is only the fine attention which has been freed from the self-occupations of the body or the mind, that matters. One might say that a certain kind of forgetting is a part of remembering or being connected with the Real. One needs to understand this in order to be free of one's own will, effort, aim and the like in order to be able to hear and serve a higher aim. As Madame de Salzmann said, "Both effort and letting go are needed. It is important to know the point of transition. It is very subtle. The ego makes the effort, then the ego has to let go. Always

search for the balance.

(35) Robert de Ropp *Self-Completion: Keys to the Meaningful Life* (Nevada City, California: Gateway Publishers, 1988), p. 121.

(36) Robert de Ropp *Self-Completion: Keys to the Meaningful Life* (Nevada City, California: Gateway Publishers, 1988), pp. 77-79.

(37) William Patrick Patterson *Voices in the Dark* (Fairfax, California: Arete Communications, 2000), p. 25.

(38) C. Daly King *The Oragean Version* (Utrecht, Netherlands: Eureka Editions, 2014), pp. 287-288).

(39) Solange Claustres *Being Conscious with G.I. Gurdjieff* (Utrecht, Netherlands: Eureka Editions, 2009), pp. 157-158.

(40) Roger Lipsey *Gurdjieff Reconsidered: The Life, the Teachings, the Legacy* (Boulder: Shambhala, 2019), p. 152.

(41) Jacob Needleman *An Unknown World* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 2013), pp. 172-173.

(42) G.I. Gurdjieff *Gurdjieff's Early Talks 1914-1931* (London: Book Studio, 2014), p. 373.

(43) G.I. Gurdjieff *Gurdjieff's Early Talks 1914-1931* (London: Book Studio, 2014), p. 392.

(44) G.I. Gurdjieff *Transcripts of Gurdjieff's Meetings 1941-1946.* (London: Book Studio, 2009), pp. 104-105.

(45) G.I. Gurdjieff *Paris Meetings 1943* (Toronto: Dolmen Meadow Editions, 2017), p. 37.

(46) G.I. Gurdjieff *Paris Meetings 1943* (Toronto: Dolmen Meadow Editions, 2017), p. 20.

(47) Gerald de Symons Beckwith *Ouspensky's Fourth Way* (Oxford, England: Starnine Publishing), p. 2015.

(48) Jacob Needleman *Why Can't We Be Good* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 2008), p. 177.