

WRITINGS¹

Gurdjieff left an enduring legacy of great value for future generations in the form of his writings, Movements and sacred dances, and music. In a sense, these three facets of his teaching represent a living expression of the ‘law of three,’ whereby the Movements can be equated with the active, affirming force, music with the passive, receptive force and his writings with the reconciling, harmonizing force. Each form engages all three aspects of the human being while focusing their center of gravity on one primary function: Movements (body), music (feelings) and writings (mind). But the full appreciation and ability to receive the spiritual nourishment inherent in each form requires the active, simultaneous participation of all three functions in a state of harmonious balance.

The same triadic principle is reflected in Gurdjieff’s own writings: “The *Tales* are uniquely constructed to involve and impact each of the three brains (thinking, feeling and bodily sensation), opening into and melding together essential doorways of perception through which we can begin to apprehend broader aspects of Reality.” (1)

Gurdjieff made it very clear that his writings were not merely intended to pass on verbal knowledge; they were designed to reach our inner world and develop and awaken the embryonic essence or ‘real I.’ He gave this advice to his students when reading or listening to his written works:

You only read with your head. Do an exercise. Read only a little – a page at a time. At first you must try to understand with your head, then to feel, then to experience. And then come back and think. Exercise yourself to read with your three centers. In each book there is material for enriching oneself. It doesn’t matter what you read and it doesn’t matter the quantity, but quality of the *way* of reading.” (2)

The written teachings imparted by Gurdjieff and his students have their roots in ancient oral traditions. The storytelling traditions of the Middle and Far East, which greatly influenced Gurdjieff in his search for objective knowledge, are essentially an oral transmission of esoteric knowledge. In the context of a spiritual teaching, oral transmission is an example of a direct conscious influence from one person (teacher) to another (student). But such an oral teaching, which plays a primary role in many of the world’s spiritual traditions, is often misunderstood:

It is not simply a question of words spoken, rather than written down. The oral tradition may here be seen to be the entire work of often invisible psychological, social and physical conditions created by a master, not the least of which is the specific, often silent intensity of the atmosphere created by the being of the teacher and the community of pupils. It is an indispensable aspect of all spiritual transmission. (3)

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Gurdjieff was introduced to the oral transmission of ancient knowledge by his father, who was a renowned *ashokh* (bard, storyteller), and clearly assimilated various oral teachings from many different spiritual traditions during his extended search for esoteric knowledge. With his students, Gurdjieff placed great significance on a direct transmission of higher knowledge from teacher to pupil, believing that the inner sense of certain ideas and exercises could only be communicated in the context of oral tradition:

A definitive characteristic of a living teaching or way is that it cannot be found in any book. Many books may make us sensitive to the existence of the path and help us find the threshold, but rare are those which can go further to serve as a precise map for orientation along the way . . . The word “teaching” should refer strictly to a direct relational experience that takes place in the presence of a teacher, in particular through oral transmission. (4)

Students have reported how Gurdjieff would privately share teachings and exercises with individuals or small groups based on their current situation and level of spiritual development. In these encounters he would provide specific teachings, exercises or tasks, challenge and shock pupils, or redirect their efforts along more productive lines. Gurdjieff was always careful to stress to his students that they should not share the teachings and exercises he transmitted to them: “This that I tell you is for you alone, and it must not be discussed with other people.” (5) Gurdjieff’s oral instructions made a deep impression on his students:

He would speak with the exactitude of an old and experienced physician prescribing treatment to his patients, choosing his words very carefully and talking in grave and convincing tones. At such times, his words fell on our ears with immense weight for they seemed to be backed not only by his own wisdom, but by the authority of a long line of unseen and unknown teachers stretching back into a distant and misty past. (6)

When Gurdjieff began writing in the mid-1920s, he would have drafts of his chapters read aloud to his students. In many ways his writings, especially *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson*, are constructed in a way that mirrors the storytelling and oral traditions of his past. He placed great importance on the proper cadence, rhythm and pronunciation of the often complex words and sentences comprising the text. (7) Readings of Gurdjieff’s three series of writings, *All and Everything*, remained a mainstay of his teaching until his death in 1949.

Today, the Gurdjieff Foundation includes group readings of *Beelzebub’s Tales* and *Meetings with Remarkable Men* as well as oral teachings transmitted by senior students to novice practitioners, as essential components of the Work: “The Gurdjieff Work remains above all an oral tradition, transmitted under specially created conditions from person to person, continually unfolding, without fixed doctrinal beliefs or external rites, as a way towards freeing humanity from the waking sleep that holds us in a kind of hypnotic illusion.” (8) In keeping with Work tradition, these ‘inner work’ oral teachings are communicated strictly under the supervision of the Foundation and are not shared with the general public.

In the early phases of his teaching, before his serious automobile accident in 1924, Gurdjieff transmitted his ideas through lectures, discussions, conversations and individual instruction. To focus their attention on the immediate content of his talks, he did not allow students to take notes. But records of his teaching during this period have survived and form the basis of many of the books written by his students which were published following his death:

A few far-sighted listeners – with astonishing powers of memory and in most cases without Gurdjieff’s knowledge – made notes afterwards, either alone or with some of the others, of whatever they had heard. The notes kept by different people were gradually collected and have been compared, translated where necessary, and tested by reading them aloud to some of those who heard the original talks. Incomplete as they are, even fragmentary in some cases, they are an authentic rendering of Gurdjieff’s approach to work on oneself, as it was developed informally at the necessary moment. (9)

While some of the accounts of Gurdjieff’s pupils have been published and have entered the public domain, others remain unpublished in national, university and private libraries. During Gurdjieff’s lifetime, unpublished records of his talks and meetings were quietly circulated among his closest pupils and drafts of his writings were regularly read aloud by his students. With the exception of *The Herald of Coming Good*, which was privately printed in 1933 and withdrawn by the author a year later, none of Gurdjieff’s writings were published during his lifetime.

The first authoritative, comprehensive exposition of Gurdjieff’s vast system of psychological and cosmological ideas, P.D. Ouspensky’s *In Search of the Miraculous*, appeared in print in October 1949, shortly before Gurdjieff’s death. In 1950 *Beelzebub’s Tales* was published in New York by Harcourt Brace and in London by Routledge & Kegan Paul. *Meetings with Remarkable Men* was published in 1963 by Dutton and Routledge & Kegan Paul and the third series, *Life is Real Only Then, When “I Am,”* was issued in 1975 by Triangle Editions. Accounts and memoirs by Gurdjieff’s pupils began to appear in print shortly after his death and have continued unabated to the current day. There are now hundreds of books and countless articles devoted to Gurdjieff’s life and teachings. The corpus of literature by and about Gurdjieff may be placed into four general categories:

- Books written by Gurdjieff himself
- Books written by students of Gurdjieff
- Books, monographs and articles produced by outside observers, journalists, scholars, critics and current ‘Work’ students
- Biographies of Gurdjieff

A number of guides and annotated bibliographies of this literature have been published (10), the most extensive and reliable being Walter Driscoll’s *Gurdjieff: An Annotated Bibliography*. Further written material is available on a number of websites. The most authoritative is www.gurdjieff.org which is affiliated with the Gurdjieff

Foundation. Another valuable source is “The Gurdjieff Journal” which is available at www.gurdjiefflegacy.org.

Writings of Gurdjieff

Following his serious automobile accident in July 1924, Gurdjieff decided to transmit his teachings in written form in a series of books. He recounts how his accident forced him to completely change his previous teaching plans: “Since I had not, when in full strength and health, succeeded in introducing in practice into the life of people the beneficial truths elucidated for them by me, then I must at least, at any cost, succeed in doing this in theory, before my death.” (11)

During his recovery period after the accident, Gurdjieff planned the design, structure and content of his future writings. He began formally writing in December 1924 and continued almost without interruption until May 1935, when he suddenly stopped writing altogether.

Gurdjieff typically wrote in pencil in ruled notebooks, fuelled by strong black coffee, cigarettes and Armagnac. Although he sometimes composed quietly in his room at the Prieuré or outdoors on the terrace, his preferred location was in a public place like the Café de la Paix in Paris or the Café Henri IV in Fontainebleau. During motor trips with his students he would frequently stop and write by the roadside or at neighbourhood cafés and restaurants. When asked why he wrote in busy cafés and noisy gathering-places he replied: “I always work in cafés, dance halls, places where I see people, how they are; where I see those most drunk, most abnormal. Seeing them, I can produce impulse of love in me. From that I write my books.” (12)

He completed a rough draft of his first series of writings, entitled *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson*, in 1927 but decided to rewrite the manuscript and it was not until 1930 that it was more or less finished. He began his second series, *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, in 1928 and completed it in the early 1930s. He turned his attention to a third series, *Life is Real Only Then, When “I Am,”* but left it unfinished when he decided to stop writing altogether in May 1935.

There are a number of different accounts by his pupils of the process of writing, translating and editing his texts. (13) The general sense is that Gurdjieff wrote brief notes in Armenian which led to extended dictations in Russian to a pupil or secretary, usually Olga de Hartmann. These were then roughly translated into English or French by Russian- or Armenian-speaking pupils and then sent to noted English editor and literary critic A.R. Orage in New York for a more polished translation.

When the first draft of Gurdjieff’s writing was sent to Orage in 1925, he was initially “baffled” and they were returned as “completely unintelligible.” Subsequent efforts were more successful, and soon Orage was an enthusiastic editor: “The reading of the book is an exercise in sustained attention, together with imaginative understanding. To under-

stand, an effort must be made with all three centers. Fragmentary effort fails to make a whole.” (14) Orage responded to critics of the early manuscript by describing the process of translating and editing to fulfill Gurdjieff’s intentions:

Some of you still criticize the faulty grammar and punctuation and ask why I do not do something about it. Well, although from the first writing the sense is in each chapter, Gurdjieff is constantly re-writing and revising. As you may know, he writes in pencil in Armenian; this is translated into Russian, and then into literal English by Russians; it is then gone over by one or two English and American pupils at the Prieuré who have only a rough knowledge of the use of words. All I can do at present is to revise the English when it obscures the sense. Although I have talked over the chapters with Gurdjieff and discussed the *sense* of them, he will never explain the meaning of anything. His task is to write the book, ours to make the effort to understand. The style and sense are Gurdjieff’s. (15)

Gurdjieff continued to write prodigiously, but in 1927 he realized that the first version of *Beelzebub’s Tales* was completely inaccessible and incomprehensible to anyone but the most perceptive and discerning student. Virtually no one who had read or heard the manuscript could fathom his intended meaning, and he decided to completely rewrite the text. By 1930 he was satisfied with a provisional typescript and had 102 copies privately printed. But he continued to revise the manuscript as he carefully observed listeners’ reactions to oral readings of the book:

If Gurdjieff had *Beelzebub’s Tales* read aloud to his pupils and the meaning was too readily understood, he would alter the offending passage in the book, lengthen his already endless sentences, and conceal entirely the already obscure symbolism. “Must dig dog deeper,” he would say; and his students would have to scrabble for the bone. (16)

Finally, in January 1949 in New York City, Gurdjieff announced to his students that he had decided to publish *Beelzebub’s Tales*. Some of his followers were against the decision, arguing that there were numerous mistakes, grammatical errors and faulty punctuation, and that the text required proper editing. But Gurdjieff disagreed: “It is a rough diamond. There’s not time now to edit it. It will have to go.” (17) *Beelzebub’s Tales* was eventually published in February 1950, followed by *Meetings with Remarkable Men* in 1963 and *Life is Real Only Then, When “I Am”* in 1975. Gurdjieff stipulated that his writings should be read in order, as it was important to be acquainted with earlier works before proceeding to later ones. And in the opening to the first series, “Friendly Advice,” he counselled his readers:

Read each of my written expositions thrice:
First – at least as you have already become mechanized to read all your contemporary books and newspapers;
Second – as if you were reading aloud to another person;
And only third – try to fathom the gist of my writings.
Only then will you be able to count upon forming your own impartial judgment, proper to yourself alone, on my writings. And only then

can my hope be actualized that according to your understanding you will obtain the specific benefit for yourself which I anticipate, and which I wish for you with all my being.

Gurdjieff made it clear that the explicit aim of his writings was to transmit his teachings to future generations, what he called a 'Legominism.' Each of his books was written for a different purpose, as is reflected in the writing style and terminology of each. In his preface to the first series, he describes his intention:

FIRST SERIES: To destroy, mercilessly, without any compromises whatsoever, in the mentation and feelings of the reader, the beliefs and views, by centuries rooted in him, about everything existing in the world.

SECOND SERIES: To acquaint the reader with the material required for a new creation and to prove the soundness and good quality of it.

THIRD SERIES: To assist the arising, in the mentation and in the feelings of the reader, of a verifiable, nonfantastic representation not of that illusory world which he now perceives, but of the world existing in reality.

Gurdjieff intended his writings to challenge readers by demanding “special attention, time, dedication and real effort to master his style, to separate allegory from fact, as well as truly absorb his new and difficult ideas – both spiritual and practical – so as to use them as tools for self-study.” (18) His writings were designed to operate on many levels and touch all aspects of the human being:

The principal aim of Gurdjieff's writings was not to provide historical information, but to serve as a call to awakening and as a continuous source of guidance for the inner search that is the *raison d'être* of his teachings. His writings are cast in forms that are directed not only to the intellectual function but also to the emotional and even subconscious sensitivities that, all together, make up the whole of the human psyche. His writings therefore demand and support the search for a finer quality of self-attention on the part of the reader, failing which the thought contained in them is unverifiable at its deeper levels. (19)

Although the three series of *All and Everything* were published posthumously, Gurdjieff did make one abortive effort to publicly disseminate his ideas during his lifetime. In September 1932, he began hastily crafting *The Herald of Coming Good*, subtitled “First Appeal to Contemporary Humanity.” It contained the first public information about Gurdjieff's life and search for esoteric knowledge, including the fact that at one time he was a professional hypnotist and used some of his early pupils as guinea pigs for his “experiments.” Some of his current followers were shocked and appalled by this revelation. The book was eccentrically written and replete with preposterous and unverifiable assertions.

Gurdjieff was unable to find a publisher and distributed copies privately to his followers and to journalists. The latter quickly dismissed its “abysmal” literary quality and some even characterized it as “the work of a man who was no longer sane.” Even some of his own followers reached the same conclusion: “Hundreds of copies were sent to Ouspensky who had them burned (hypothesizing that the author had contracted syphilis and gone mad).” (20) Gurdjieff later had regrets about publishing it: “If you have not yet read this book entitled *The Herald of Coming Good* then thank the circumstances and do not read it.” (21)

Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson, Gurdjieff’s magnum opus, is considered by his followers and many others as a masterpiece of spiritual literature and “the first truly comprehensive modern myth.” Its 1200-plus pages are a vast and epic platform for the transmission of his profound psychological and cosmological ideas. Biographer Roger Lipsey: “Without question it is unique. It speaks a highly stylized language unlike any other, it draws us into a religious universe unlike any other, it offers an alternative history of Earth and mankind unlike any other, and it delivers an unrelenting critique of what we are, again unlike any other – a critique accompanied nearly on every page by a vision of true values that endow life with dignity and larger purpose.” (22)

This book is without doubt one of the most extraordinary books ever published. Its title is no exaggeration, for the book not only touches on all and every conceivable subject, but it also *is* all and everything – that is, a collection of science fiction tales, an allegory, a satire, a philosophical treatise, a sociological essay, an introduction to psychology, a cryptogram and, for those who follow Gurdjieff’s teaching, a bible. It is a highly unusual mixture of entertainment and esotericism, humor and seriousness, obscurity and clarity. (23)

Yet when *Beelzebub’s Tales* was first published in 1950, it was ridiculed and misunderstood by literary critics who described the book as “unreadable,” “insufferable nonsense” and “a paranoid fantasy.” However, over the last 60 years critical perceptions have changed, and *Beelzebub’s Tales* is now recognized by many in the literary and academic worlds as a monumental achievement.

The book takes the form of a science fiction epic in which, on a long spaceship journey, the wise fallen angel Beelzebub imparts to his young grandson Hassen his understanding of the “peculiar three-brained beings” living on Earth. In a series of extended visits to the planet ranging from prehistoric to current times, Beelzebub provides “an objectively impartial criticism” of the human condition and the direction of conscious evolution and spiritual awakening.

Embedded in the vast narrative, in encoded form, are Gurdjieff’s fundamental psychological and cosmological ideas, with special attention paid to the Law of Three and the Law of Seven. John Bennett: “Gurdjieff’s book deals with historical, psychological and sociological questions, but not by way of analysis and discussion . . . It can be conceived as a vast allegory into which historical and scientific information of

immense interest is introduced as well as theoretical and practical teachings about human psychology and ‘work on oneself’.” (24)

Beelzebub's Tales operates on many different levels, from the literal to the purely symbolic and allegorical. One of the great challenges for the reader is to distinguish the one from the other. In the very first chapter of the book, “The Arousing of Thought,” Gurdjieff warns against taking all that he writes as literal. And clearly, some of the assertions he makes in *Beelzebub's Tales* are not to be taken seriously (“the sun neither lights nor heats” and “apes descended from humans”).

In a conversation recorded by Ouspensky, Gurdjieff stipulated that esoteric knowledge cannot be transmitted strictly through logic or ordinary language: “The people who have possessed objective knowledge have tried to express the idea of unity in ‘myths,’ in ‘symbols,’ and in particular ‘verbal formulas’ which having been transmitted without alteration, having carried on the idea from one school to another, often from one epoch to another.” (25) In *Beelzebub's Tales* Gurdjieff used a variety of linguistic devices (myth, allegory, metaphor, symbolism, parable, aphorism and pictorial image) to reach the inner world of the reader or listener. He took advantage of paradox, contradiction, irony, absurdities, ambiguity and repetition to disrupt automatic patterns of thinking, reasoning and assessment. He also employed other non-linear techniques such as satire, wit and humour in his narrative, often by quoting wise sayings from the legendary Eastern “wise fool” Mullah Nassr Eddin.

Gurdjieff's style of writing was deliberately challenging to the reader or listener; it is clearly a difficult book to approach, understand and fully appreciate. His outlandishly long sentences are laden with subsidiary clauses and parenthetical ideas that require a great effort of attention on the part of the reader to discern their meaning. At first sight these digressions appear rambling and disconnected, but closer study adds new insights and dimensions to the ideas being explored. However, many readers initially react with abject perplexity and seem overwhelmed by the unusual writing style:

The periods are few and far between, and to reach Gurdjieff's meaning, the reader has to hack through a jungle of verbiage apparently arranged so as to lose him in a thicket of subordinate clauses. The whole is spiced with Gurdjieff's cumbrous sense of humor and flavored with terms coined from every language under the sun . . . this book can have no casual reader as it is frankly impenetrable. (26)

Further complicating the matter is Gurdjieff's ample use of odd-sounding neologisms (invented words) like ‘*soliakooriapa*.’ or ‘*onandjiki*’ (27) While some of the roots of these multi-syllabic words are sometimes traceable (e.g. ‘*Triamazikamno*’ where tri = three), generally their overt meaning escapes easy comprehension. In fact, many of the neologisms were created almost at random – Gurdjieff would spot an unusual word or phrase on a sign or billboard and incorporate it into his text. The general sense of his pupils was that the neologisms were designed to prevent the habitual associations usually connected with a common word or concept.

Gurdjieff's unusual vocabulary and sentence structure forces the reader to abandon normal verbal associations, open up to new ideas and possibilities, and develop fresh perspectives. (28) The reader is not provided clearcut instructions or defined states of inner development – they must work intensively to unravel and overcome the challenges presented them by decoding Gurdjieff's unfamiliar nonlinear text. In *Reflections on Gurdjieff's Whim*, Keith Buzzell articulates the nature of this task: “Gurdjieff *works* on our inner world. He introduces a host of new concepts, many in metaphorical form giving only a brief outline and leaving essential aspects out altogether. Fragments of concepts are scattered through the *Beelzebub's Tales* and *we* have to make the effort to bring them together into proper relationship. Nothing is given in completed form, for this would take away from each of us the opportunity to come to a point of understanding – *for ourselves.*” (29)

John G. Bennett succinctly describes the nexus of challenges (30) that await the reader or listener of *Beelzebub's Tales*:

In the first place, the language is unfamiliar. New words are introduced to convey ideas which are quite new to our modern thought, or to give a fresh turn to old ideas. At first, the unfamiliarity of these new words produces a disconcerting impression. Far more difficult is the form of the narrative itself. Sometimes the stories are very simple and touching, at others they convey an exceedingly subtle and elusive teaching. The narrative is not continuous, the thread often being broken to insert and emphasize some special idea. Much is conveyed in the form of dramatic pictures or allegories. It is almost impossible to tell without very deep and persistent study what is meant to be taken literally, what allegorically, and what in the form of a special symbolism . . . The most important and valuable teaching is often introduced by the way in a passage which at first glance seems a mere repetition of something that has been said before. The central ideas are themselves very hard to understand and accept. Even when all that is said on a given subject is pieced together and studied, there remains a quality which eludes any ordinary intellectual approach. (31)

Perhaps the greatest challenge in reading and understanding the book is its richness of content and multiple levels of meaning. In a talk to his students in 1943, Gurdjieff addressed this point:

It is a very interesting book. Everything is there. All that exists, all that has existed, all that can exist. The beginning, the end, all the secrets of the creation of the world; all is there. But one must understand, and to understand depends on one's individuality. The more man has been instructed in a certain way, the more he can see. Subjectively, everyone is able to understand according to the level he occupies, for it is an objective book, and everyone should understand something in it. One person understands one part, another a thousand times more . . . In *Beelzebub* there is everything, I have said it, even how to make an omelet. Among other things, it is explained; and at the same time there isn't a word in *Beelzebub* about cooking. (32)

Gurdjieff recommended reading *Beelzebub's Tales* at least three times before trying to “fathom the gist” of it. Repeated and attentive reading of the book yields progressively deeper insights and understanding, especially if one avoids premature interpretations and the tendency to evaluate the text from the standpoint of habitual associations and previous knowledge. Annie-Lou Staveley:

Gurdjieff advised us to read, reread and then read this Book again many, many times. Read it aloud with others and read it to yourself. Even if you read it thirty, even fifty times, you will always find something you missed before – a sentence which gives with great precision the answer to a question you have had for years – a connection to quite another part of the Book. You will eventually build up a network of real ideas that will be your own knowledge, not second-hand, but the priceless, hard-won fruit of your own struggle for understanding. (33)

Gurdjieff's unorthodox writing style was clearly calculated to reach deeper levels of the human psyche beyond our normal patterns of thought, feeling and perception. Roger Lipsey speaks to this inner dimension in his biography *Gurdjieff Reconsidered*:

Gurdjieff makes clear that he wishes to speak not just to his reader's day-to-day mind but also to a layer much further down, which he calls the subconscious: closer to real feeling and recognitions, closer to what one really is. His adjectival use of the word *being* is a recurrent reminder of the two lives within us: surface consciousness, the realm of information and patterned response, and authentic depth where genuine Reason can grow and refine over a lifetime, where duty and also love are recognized without compromise and acted upon. *Being* refers back again and again to the whole of human nature, to the possible anchoring of thought, feeling, and action at depth in ourselves. A related term in Beelzebub's lexicon: *common presence*. Used throughout the book, it is another reminder of our possible unity and coherence, of the dignity of the human presence when more fully developed: aware, sensitive, inquiring, guided by sound values, capable of gentle or decisive action, free but not remote. *Beelzebub's Tales* is a twelve-hundred page argument for decency and dedication. (34)

A revised edition of *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* was published in 1992, initiated and directed by Jeanne de Salzmänn in collaboration with senior members of the Gurdjieff Foundation. It was based on the “greater ease of expression” of the 1956 French translation and study of the original Russian manuscript, which was eventually published in 2000 by Traditional Studies Press of Toronto. The stated purpose of the revision was to render a somewhat simpler and more contemporary English version than the original 1950 publication: “to clarify the verbal surface while respecting the author's thought and style.” (35)

The publication of the new edition was controversial in Work circles. The editors of the new version were criticized for their failure to consult with other Gurdjieff groups and for the perceived liberties they took with the original English manuscript. In retrospect, the controversy seems somewhat overblown. The new edition closely follows the

original text in most places, with relatively minor stylistic and cosmetic changes which modify some of the more awkward sentence structures and recasts the cultural and time-bound expressions of Gurdjieff's teachings in a more contemporary framework. The general consensus is that both versions are reliable, but that the original 1950 translation should be considered the definitive exposition of Gurdjieff's teachings.

A number of commentaries on *Beelzebub's Tales* have been written by students of Gurdjieff and by scholars. (36) Commentaries by students, especially A.R. Orage and John G. Bennett, naturally carry more weight as they were directly involved in Gurdjieff's work and have a deeper appreciation and understanding of the ideas he was trying to convey in his book than independent observers. At their best, the commentaries can offer insightful observations, illuminate certain passages and chapters and provide fresh avenues to explore.

Readings from *Beelzebub's Tales* formed an important part of Gurdjieff's teaching to his groups in France, England and America for almost 25 years. Today, they continue to be a mainstay of the activities of the various groups associated with the Gurdjieff Foundation as well as other independent groups and organizations. Generally, discussion of the meaning of the book is discouraged, as it tends to dilute the direct impact of reading or hearing Gurdjieff's own words.

The second series, *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, was completed by Gurdjieff in the early 1930s but not published until 1963, in part because at that time interest in Gurdjieff and his teachings was rapidly growing throughout the world. *Meetings* is much more readable and easier to approach than *Beelzebub's Tales*. (37) On the surface, it seems like a grand adventure through exotic lands, cultures and times:

It is an adventure based on the extraordinary early life of G.I. Gurdjieff and his search through remote and uncharted regions for those ancient truths which might serve to develop the consciousness of contemporary man. It receives its substance from the exciting and often deeply moving accounts of those who reared and trained him, and of those who shared his unusual journey. It is an adventure of the mind – growing, being formed, setting out after inner knowledge, discovering it and putting it to the test of practice. Thus, it is an adventure in two worlds, and it will be the reader's delight and enrichment to discern where one world ends and the other begins. (38)

But the book also reflects deeper levels, as it blends autobiography, travelogue, parable and allegory to tell the story of his childhood, education and travels in search of ancient esoteric knowledge. The autobiographical content may not be entirely factual and many of the details are impossible to verify. He was not alone in his search, as he was accompanied by a group of fellow seekers – doctors, priests, archeologists, engineers – who were called the “Seekers of Truth.”

Following a lengthy introduction, the book is structured as a series of stories, each chapter titled with the name of one of the “remarkable men” he knew in his early life, including his father, companions of early adulthood and fellow seekers. The various

characters of the narrative are presented almost as role-models, each remarkable for a certain characteristic or quality – courage, endurance and perseverance in the face of difficulties, ingenuity, resourcefulness, overcoming laziness, self-restraint, tolerance, compassion. Yet each has normal human weaknesses and failings. They worked with the normal circumstances of everyday life to create within themselves a new level of being. All were serious seekers who were not easily satisfied with the answers they received for their burning spiritual questions. Whether these remarkable men (and one woman) ever existed is open to question, and they may represent composite portraits of individuals Gurdjieff met in the course of his travels who illustrate fundamental human types and their individual searches for spiritual truth.

The foundation of the book is the nature of the search for objective truth, the obstacles preventing a full actualization of our latent spiritual possibilities, and the means to accomplish this sacred task. In *Meetings* Gurdjieff provides “the material required for a new creation” that would lead to the development of being, presence and conscience congruent with the reality of everyday life and appropriate for the conditions of our contemporary world.

The book ends with a lengthy epilogue, “The Material Question,” that was added to the original manuscript. It is an account of Gurdjieff’s response to a question at a meeting in New York City in 1924 about how he financed his extensive searches for esoteric knowledge and the establishment of his Institute. With frank honesty Gurdjieff reveals the considerable ingenuity, versatility and sustained initiative that he exercised in order to achieve his aims.

In the late 1970s, Jeanne de Salzmann and senior members of the Gurdjieff Foundation initiated a Work project to create a film adaptation of *Meetings with Remarkable Men*. Directed by Peter Brook, the full-length feature film was commercially released in 1979.

In the early 1930s Gurdjieff began work on the third series of *All and Everything*, which he titled *Life is Real Only Then, When “I Am”* (the title itself teaches). In May 1935 he suddenly stopped writing; the manuscript was never completed and part of it was lost. (39) Many of Gurdjieff’s followers have wondered why his last work was left unfinished. In the Foreword to the third series Jeanne de Salzmann writes:

Why did Gurdjieff prepare only a few chapters – to which he attached a special significance – and then completely stop writing in order to devote himself to a small group of pupils, with whom he worked until the end? . . . Gurdjieff had an indirect way of making people feel the truth. He only gave out these chapters to be read aloud at a precise moment in his presence, to a particular group, or to certain persons he had designated, bringing them suggestions or images which made them face themselves and their inner contradictions. This then, was no longer the teaching of the doctrine, but the incarnate Presence of a knowledge, of a reality, which touched one directly and inevitably evoked a response. After this, the chapters were put away. (40)

Gurdjieff did not feel that it was absolutely necessary to publish the third series and instructed Mme de Salzmann shortly before his death: “To publish the Third Series is not necessary. It was written for another purpose. Nevertheless, if you believe you ought to do so one day, publish it.” (41) The book is very revealing about Gurdjieff’s inner life, as he describes some of the struggles and intense sufferings he experienced to realize his aim. John Bennett explores the inner dimensions of the third series: “Most people have no inner life in the true sense of the term. Their activity is outward and inwardly they are passive. The great task before us all is to rediscover the true significance of the inner life of man – not for its own sake or to take refuge there from the tribulations of the outer life – but because it is only the man who is inwardly alive who can play his part in the great work which lies before us.” (42) Bennett argues that the third series completes the second series. The focus is on the developing inner life of Gurdjieff throughout his search and the nature of authentic ‘work on oneself.’

In the Second Series there is very little reference to Gurdjieff’s own inner world, that is to his own personal reactions to the experiences and adventures of the “Seekers of the Truth.” These chapters give a vivid picture of his companions and their journeys – but the reader looks at the scene through Gurdjieff’s eyes and does not see Gurdjieff himself. The Third Series follows just the opposite course. It is, through and through, *a personal record of inner experience*. It describes the events of Gurdjieff’s life over a period of forty years. Some of these events are already known to the reader from the Second Series – or even may have occurred during the period of his own contact with Gurdjieff and his work. A new light is thrown on all that occurred, by the revelation of his own inner experiences. We can see from these writings how there was, over the forty years of struggle, a gradual emergence and clarification of the aim and significance of Gurdjieff’s own life. This is not stated explicitly, but the attentive reader can see how the conception of his own task passed through the stages of the necessity to *know*, the necessity to *be*, and the necessity to *do*. The Third Series cannot be understood by someone who has not immersed himself in *Beelzebub* and *Remarkable Men*. But if this preparation has been rightly conducted the study of the Third Series produces on the reader an extraordinary direct effect on the decision and power to make these efforts to *work on oneself*. (43)

A lengthy prologue and introduction are followed by five chapters dealing primarily with A.R. Orage’s New York groups and the shocks administered by Gurdjieff to reorient the direction of their work. The enigmatic final chapter, “The Inner and Outer World of Man,” ends in mid-sentence and, according to John Bennett, were the last words Gurdjieff ever wrote.

Gurdjieff intended that the third series be made available only to selected individuals who had thoroughly assimilated the contents of his earlier books. Mme de Salzmann discusses his purpose in writing the third series:

Gurdjieff had not intended it for publication. It had other ends to serve. Moreover, he never finished writing it, considering that it had already played its part – which was to show to his more advanced pupils, who could understand because it was their own question, the personal subjective sufferings, moral and physical, through which a man must pass; and what he must, in spite of everything, sacrifice if he would attain the aim that he had set himself and that needs to be stronger than all else. Furthermore, he never read any of it to unprepared people. Only the pupils who had been with him the longest could understand. (44)

A final book, although not written by Gurdjieff, expresses his teachings in his own words. *Views From the Real World: Early Talks of Gurdjieff*, published in 1973, is a collection of 41 wide-ranging talks and lectures given by Gurdjieff to his students between 1917 and 1930. Collected by Jeanne de Salzmann, the talks were reconstructed from the memories of students (who were not permitted to take verbatim notes) and verified for authenticity by Olga de Hartmann, who was present at all the meetings.

The words issuing from the pages of the book are clearly Gurdjieff's authentic voice and have an unmistakable power, as we hear how he directly instructed his students and outlined his approach to work on oneself. The volume also contains a long essay, "Glimpses of the Truth," briefly mentioned in Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous*, and written by one of Gurdjieff's Moscow pupils around 1914. Although not as definitive an expression of his teachings as his written works, *Views From the Real World* serves as excellent supplementary reading for those familiar with his ideas.

An expanded version of Gurdjieff's talks containing most of the material from *Views*, titled *Gurdjieff's Early Talks 1914-1931*, was published in 2014 by Book Studio. It is comprised of an additional 62 talks as well as variants of many of the 41 original talks which appeared in *Views*. Joseph Azize, the editor of the volume, argues that a new edition of Gurdjieff's talks to his students was necessary: "The talks published in *Views from the Real World* do not do justice to the material. The editing process behind that book was subjectively well-intentioned, but it was neither transparent nor respectful of the integrity of the texts. Available materials were omitted, and a certain amount of splicing was done." (45)

The 103 talks are arranged chronologically and span Gurdjieff's richest teaching period from 1914 to 1931. The majority of the talks were given at the Prieuré between 1922-1924. Two new sections, "Fragments" and "Sayings," are included in the text as well as an index of topics. Numerous diagrams from pupil's notes and photographs also accompany the text. *Gurdjieff's Early Talks* supersedes *Views* and represents a more definitive record of the talks Gurdjieff delivered to his students on a wide range of topics.

In 2017, Dolmen Meadow Editions published *Paris Meetings 1943*, a record of 68 group meetings in Gurdjieff's Paris apartment with his French students during 1943. At the meetings, Gurdjieff assigned note-takers and all these notes were preserved in the archives of the Institut Gurdjieff in Paris. Michel de Salzmann initially organized the

notes which were then translated into English under his direction and, later, by teams in various Foundation groups from Paris, London, New York, San Francisco and Toronto.

The notes are arranged chronologically and the exchanges between Gurdjieff and his pupils reveal the nature of a relationship between a teacher and his students as they explore the ideas and practices of a viable spiritual teaching – the Fourth Way. His responses and wise guidance provide a window into how he worked with pupils and encouraged them along the path to conscious awareness and being:

Through these notes a vivid portrait of Gurdjieff emerges. We gain new insight into his ways of working with his pupils as he responded to them according to their individual needs – with humour, patience, specific tasks, encouragement and above all immense humanity and compassion. Those familiar with Gurdjieff’s writings will find his ideas enlivened here in the practicality of his oral teaching. (46)

Books Written by Students of Gurdjieff

Books and memoirs by Gurdjieff’s primary students are second in importance only to Gurdjieff’s own writings. The books span a 35-year period of work and study with Gurdjieff, from 1914 to 1949, and range in geographical setting from Russia to New York City. Collectively, these voices create a composite portrait of their teacher and his mission, and show the staggering depth and power of the ideas and the teaching techniques employed by Gurdjieff to reach the innermost consciousness of his students. Although the accounts of students often seem, in the words of James Webb, “like a series of disconnected snapshots,” others sense an underlying element behind the variety of impressions:

It is therefore not surprising that the personal accounts about Gurdjieff can have such a diversity of expression. But all of them – although they often fall into awkward misinterpretations, or gossip, or even vanity and name-dropping – give flashes or flavors of the same fundamental experience. One cannot remain indifferent to the intimate happenings of these accounts. And depending on the reader’s own capacity to separate the wheat from the chaff, he can find some wonderful glimpses of Gurdjieff. (47)

The books penned by Gurdjieff’s pupils focus primarily on either the ideas or on personal interactions and learning experiences provided by their teacher. Some combine both aspects. By far the best exposition of the theoretical side of the teaching is P.D. Ouspensky’s *In Search of the Miraculous*, which presents Gurdjieff’s psychological and cosmological teachings clearly and in great depth. Many of the theory books which followed, by Maurice Nicoll, Kenneth Walker, C.S. Nott, John G. Bennett and others, closely mirrored Ouspensky’s presentation and, with the exception of Nicoll’s five volume *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky*, added little that was new.

The more personal memoirs of pupils capture the flavour of Gurdjieff's style of teaching and provide insights into how he taught through example, working with the ordinary events of daily life, and challenging his students' conditioned mechanical behaviour. The latter, as many students have testified, involved "treading heavily on the most sensitive corns of everyone he met." (48) There is, however, a subjective component to their narratives, as Gurdjieff worked with each pupil individually according to their temperament, needs and level of development:

Scores of personal accounts of the impression made by Gurdjieff on those who worked with him for many years, or even met him only casually, have appeared in books and periodicals. Each is necessarily subjective, for Gurdjieff was an enigma presenting a different face to every person and to every occasion . . . The principal reason why personal impressions have so little value is that Gurdjieff was from start to finish a seeker experimenting with different ways of living and behaving and with different means for accomplishing his life's work. (49)

Selective memory and factual inaccuracy also enter into each student's account. Paul Beekman Taylor documents "erroneous dates and movements, speculation based on hearsay evidence and unfortunately pure invention." (50) He specifically identifies Fritz Peters, C.S. Nott and John G. Bennett as sources of exaggerations, subjective interpretations of events and factual transgressions.

Gurdjieff's level of being and spiritual development also impacted the nature of his relationships with pupils and their recollections of interactions with him:

Another aspect, and not the least as regards the specific character of Gurdjieff's teaching, was the special awakening influence conveyed by his own presence. All who approached him on a right basis were unforgettably marked by it. Though he certainly made a strong impact on people in general, it is particularly interesting to consider the different and special relationships that he established with his pupils . . . The only purpose of an authentic teacher is to awaken others. And this awakening always takes place through laws – simple but difficult to apply – according to which real consciousness awakens consciousness just as true love awakens love. (51)

A further complicating factor was Gurdjieff's frequent role-playing or "conscious acting," following his admonition to "outwardly play a role but inwardly remain free." Many of his students admitted that they did not really know him. (52)

First-hand accounts of Gurdjieff's encounters with his pupils shed light on the sophistication and variety of means he employed to awaken them to their higher possibilities: "According to traditional conceptions, the function of a master is not limited to the teaching of doctrines, but implies an actual incarnation of knowledge, thanks to which he can awaken others, and help them in their search simply by his presence." (53) One of the most interesting aspects of these books is their clear illustration of how

Gurdjieff's teaching methods changed in response to the requirements of 'time, place and people,' while remaining faithful to the inner essence and dynamic of the Fourth Way:

What was furthermore remarkable was his way of teaching and addressing each one according to his particular capacities, inadequacies, and needs. He evidently gave Ouspensky more material about ideas than most of the others; with Thomas de Hartmann, the Russian composer, he specially developed a certain work on music; with some others he went more deeply into the study of the flow of energies through intensive work on various exercises and "sacred movements." Along with the conditions provided in common, everyone received an appropriate food. More generally speaking, near him there seemed to be no limits for transforming daily life into meaningful conditions for inner work. (54)

Before his death there was only a scattering of articles about Gurdjieff and his teachings in newspapers, periodicals and the occasional book chapter penned by writers and journalists. His pupils generally remained silent. But in October 1949, with Gurdjieff's authorization, Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* was published. When the typescript was first read to Gurdjieff, he was astonished, as Ouspensky had captured in print exactly what he had been taught: "It was as if I hear myself speaking." (55)

In Search of the Miraculous was destined to become the most comprehensive and accessible record of Gurdjieff's teaching by a pupil. Ouspensky's level of objectivity and honesty is remarkable. He presents the psychological and cosmological ideas in a specific sequence, often elaborating in later passages. *In Search* is unparalleled in its descriptions of authentic group work and the nature of the teacher-pupil relationship. Many Work teachers recommend that students read *In Search* before tackling the more challenging *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*.

Thomas and Olga de Hartmann were among Gurdjieff's earliest students and accompanied him on a perilous journey from Russia across the Caucasus mountains to Tiflis. Thomas de Hartmann collaborated with Gurdjieff in hundreds of musical compositions, and his wife served as his secretary and personal assistant for many years. Their intimate, poignant memoir *Our Life with Mr. Gurdjieff* is considered a classic of the Gurdjieff literature. In simple yet moving prose they share their vivid experiences with Gurdjieff and how he used every conceivable event in life for inner work and self-understanding.

Fritz Peters, from the age of eleven, lived for four years at Gurdjieff's Institute in France. Peters viewed Gurdjieff, for whom he had great respect and affection, and daily life at the Prieuré, through the eyes of a boy. His account of those years reveals Gurdjieff's natural rapport with children and his insistence on a practical education which developed all sides of their being. *Boyhood with Gurdjieff*, with its humour, innocence, and colourful impressions, is unique in the literature surrounding Gurdjieff.

Englishman Charles Stanley Nott studied with both Ouspensky and Gurdjieff, but clearly regarded the latter as his real teacher. He wrote two important books, *Teachings of Gurdjieff: The Journal of a Pupil*, published in 1961, and *Journey Through This World*, published in 1969. The first book also contains a valuable set of notes on A.R. Orage's commentaries on *Beelzebub's Tales*. Nott had travelled the world working at many trades, and brought a different background to his studies with his two teachers than many of their more intellectual followers. The books powerfully convey both his inner and outer experiences with Ouspensky and Gurdjieff, especially the intensity of working under the guidance of Gurdjieff, for whom he felt a deep bond and appreciation throughout his life.

In the 1930s Gurdjieff formed a women's group in Paris that became known as "The Rope." (56) Two of its members were the writers Margaret Anderson and Kathryn Hulme, famous for her novel *The Nun's Story*. Both wrote memoirs of this period: Anderson, *The Unknowable Gurdjieff* and Hulme, *Undiscovered Country*. Their detailed accounts of their parallel experiences with Gurdjieff richly evoke the atmosphere of his Paris flat, with its otherworldly ambience, splendid meals and searching conversations. The two books convey how Gurdjieff worked with the emotional centre and challenged his students to observe and overcome their conditioned selves, in part by the perceptive nicknames he gave each of the members of The Rope. The books show how Gurdjieff was able to work with all types of students and adapt his teachings to the possibilities of the situation.

During the 1930s and 1940s Gurdjieff worked intensively with a number of French groups. One of his students was the gifted writer and spiritual searcher René Daumal. During that time, he wrote the unfinished masterpiece *Mount Analogue*, inspired by Gurdjieff's teachings, but not published until 1959. This brilliant allegory describes the experiences of a group of men and women searching for and ascending a sacred mountain together. Their many perils and adventures are metaphors for the stages and challenges of the spiritual path.

During the German occupation of France in the 1940s, film director René Zuber studied with Gurdjieff and recorded his impressions and experiences in *Who Are You, Monsieur Gurdjieff?* Zuber was deeply affected by Gurdjieff's challenging teachings and enigmatic presence. His artful observations illustrate how Gurdjieff spontaneously taught through everyday life experiences and interactions and dialogues with his pupils, exposing their mechanical reactions and automatic patterns of behaviour.

Noted French surgeon Jean Vaysse studied Gurdjieff's teachings under the supervision of Jeanne de Salzmann for over 25 years and was authorized to lead groups of his own. In *Toward Awakening* he examines some of the central psychological concepts of the teaching from a fresh perspective and illuminates them with practical examples from everyday life. Of special interest is his chapter discussing specific exercises in attention leading to heightened awareness of bodily sensations.

In 1941 Solange Claustres was introduced to Gurdjieff by Jeanne de Salzmann, and worked closely with him until his death in 1949. Since that time, she has conducted Movements classes in Europe and America and led her own Work groups. Although encouraged by Mme de Salzmann to write about her experiences with Gurdjieff, she was reluctant, and her first book, *Becoming Conscious with G.I. Gurdjieff*, was not published until 1999 in France – later translated into English in 2005. Her memoir is a testament to her deep understanding of Gurdjieff’s practical teachings and provides real insight into how he worked with his pupils to lead them to a realization of their current state and the possibilities that awaited them when they awakened to their real natures as conscious human beings. In this important Work book, she weaves accounts of her experiences with Gurdjieff with descriptions of the Movements and discussions of his inner exercises and psychological teachings. Her meeting with Gurdjieff in 1941 changed her life forever: “I want to bear witness in my writing to my profound gratitude to this man who nourished me in such a substantial way.” (57)

One of the most perceptive accounts of Gurdjieff’s work with individuals and groups in the period following the Second World War is Annie Lou Staveley’s *Memories of Gurdjieff*. Staveley studied with Jane Heap in London for two decades and, along with other members of the group, met Gurdjieff for the first time in 1946. Her slim volume wonderfully captures the atmosphere of Gurdjieff’s Paris flat and his ingenious methods of teaching his students, often in subtle, indirect ways that would not normally be recognized as a spiritual teaching. When asked by someone, “What do you teach?” he responded “I wish you to know that when rain falls streets are wet.” (58)

Gurdjieff attracted a number of notable students from England, each of whom also worked with Ouspensky for extensive periods of time. Jungian psychiatrist Maurice Nicoll met Ouspensky in 1921 and studied with Gurdjieff at the Prieuré. In 1931 Ouspensky gave him permission to teach, and he led groups in England until his death in 1953. He wrote hundreds of weekly papers, letters and commentaries for members of his groups. These were later collected for the five-volume *Psychological Commentaries on the Teachings of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky*. The volumes are very focused and exact in their description of Work ideas and provide many practical insights into how to work with the teachings. When the books were published in the 1950s they were warmly received by Jeanne de Salzmann, Gurdjieff’s principal successor following his death. Nicoll possessed a brilliant mind and his own original books such as *The New Man* and *Living Time* are original, insightful and highly recommended. (59)

Kenneth Walker was a London physician who studied with Ouspensky for 24 years before meeting Gurdjieff in 1948. Walker was immediately struck by Gurdjieff’s presence and vast knowledge. He wrote three well-received books, *Venture with Ideas*, *A Study of Gurdjieff’s Teaching* and *The Making of Man*, which combine autobiographical content, important elements of the teachings he received from Ouspensky and Gurdjieff, and personal reminiscences of the two men. Walker’s intelligence, keen perception and good sense radiate throughout these books.

John G. Bennett worked briefly with Gurdjieff at the Prieuré and more extensively in the late 1940s, following many years of study with Ouspensky. He produced a number of books and numerous monographs on Gurdjieff and his teachings. His most significant books, and most useful from a Work perspective, are *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, *Witness* and *Idiots in Paris*. The first is an in-depth, extensively researched study of Gurdjieff's life and mission, the sources of his teaching and a discussion of many of his most important ideas. It is undoubtedly Bennett's most fully realized book. *Witness* is an autobiography that includes a number of revealing chapters on his experiences with Gurdjieff. *Idiots in Paris* combines the diaries of Bennett and his wife Elizabeth to chronicle their life-altering experiences with Gurdjieff in 1948-49.

John Pentland was a member of the British aristocracy who met Ouspensky in 1936, but later admitted that his years of study with him had yielded nothing of real value. That changed when he met Gurdjieff in 1948 and they soon developed a fruitful teacher-student relationship. Gurdjieff appointed Pentland to lead the Work in America following his death; this he did with distinction, serving for many years as president of the New York and California Gurdjieff Foundations and guiding many pupils in their Fourth Way studies. *Exchanges Within* is a collection of his talks and dialogues during meetings with students covering a span of many years. The emphasis is more on the practical, experiential side of the Work than on the theoretical underpinnings. Pentland's analysis of the role of attention, sensation and flow of energies in the process of human transformation are especially helpful for the serious student.

Jacob Needleman was a professor of philosophy at San Francisco State University and a longtime student of the Work. He edited two excellent collections of writings by direct students of Gurdjieff and others who have studied his teachings. *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching*, co-edited by George Baker, is an impressive volume of scholarly studies, discussions of Gurdjieff's music and Movements and portraits of personal teaching encounters with Gurdjieff. The latter form the heart of the book, and include many previously unpublished accounts by pupils such as Solange Claustres, Michel Conge, Pauline de Dampierre, Marthe de Gaigneron, Henriette Lannes, Genevieve Lief and Henri Tracol. *The Inner Journey: Views from the Gurdjieff Work*, published in 2008, is an anthology of articles selected from the journal *Parabola: Myth, Tradition and the Search for Meaning*. The collection is broad in scope and interweaves the writings of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky with contributions by many senior Work practitioners such as Peter Brook, Margaret Flinsch, Christopher Fremantle, John Pentland, Ravi Ravindra, Paul Reynard, Michel de Salzmann, William Segal and P.L. Travers. The volume is a significant addition to the Gurdjieff literature and shows the growing influence of Gurdjieff's ideas in the contemporary world.

Jeanne de Salzmann is widely regarded in Work circles as Gurdjieff's greatest student. Before he died he entrusted her with the preservation and continuation of his teachings, a task she performed admirably until her death in 1990 at the age of 101. *The Reality of Being*, published in 2010, is based on notebooks of her reflections on Gurdjieff's teachings over the course of many decades, carefully edited by a small group of her family and followers. The chapters are arranged according to themes which give the

book a unifying structure. *The Reality of Being* is unlike any other book in the Gurdjieff literature and arguably ranks with *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*, *Meetings with Remarkable Men* and *In Search of the Miraculous* as a masterful exposition of the nature of 'work on oneself.' De Salzmänn makes only passing reference to the theoretical side of Gurdjieff's teachings, instead focusing on the central core of the practical work of self-observation, self-remembering, attention and flow of energies throughout the organism. In a sense, the book is a contemplative inquiry into the nature of what it means to be fully human, and a testament to the depth of her spiritual understanding and development.

Secondary and Ancillary Literature

The last few decades have witnessed a proliferation of books and articles about Gurdjieff by people who in fact never met or worked with him. This literature falls into three broad categories: critical appraisals, scholarly and academic works, and offerings by practitioners of the Work who studied with direct students of Gurdjieff. As would be expected with such a wide range of written works, there is a great disparity in terms of quality, value, relevance and level of understanding of Gurdjieff and his teachings. Some books are valuable additions to the Gurdjieff corpus, while others make marginal contributions or are merely polemical axe-grinding efforts. Michel de Salzmänn sounds a warning about subjective, ill-informed commentators who distort the reality of Gurdjieff's teachings:

One cannot blame premature attempts for their failure to meet an almost impossible challenge, for their failure to convey, outside its proper ground, the metaphysical essence of the teaching, which is self-realization and the correlative capability for true action. But did those responsible for these attempts ever consider that naïve and pretentious intentions in this realm could very well engender in others thought and reactions that are deeply misleading? (60)

Books penned by authors critical of Gurdjieff and his spiritual perspective tend to be the most likely to offer mystification, distortion and misunderstanding to their readers. A prime example of this approach is Louis Pauwels' *Gurdjieff*, published in France in 1954. The book caused an immediate uproar in Gurdjieffian circles, and not without reason. By turns sensational, biased, indiscriminate and implausible (linking Gurdjieff with Nazi ideology), *Gurdjieff* can be assigned to the garbage bin of amateurish speculation. Years later Pauwels acknowledged the book's failings, calling it a "sin of youth."

A much more sophisticated critique of Gurdjieff and his teachings is *Gurdjieff: In the Light of Tradition* by scholar Whithall Perry. Originally published in the journal *Studies in Comparative Religion*, it appeared in book form in 1978. Perry writes from the perspective of the traditionalist school of René Guenon and Frithjof Schuon, who disclaimed Gurdjieff's Fourth Way as contrary to traditional spiritual teachings. (61) Although on the surface Perry's arguments appear to carry weight, deeper investigation reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of Gurdjieff and his work, and the book can best be classified as a polemic.

Perhaps the most interesting critique of Gurdjieff and his successors is *The Teachers of Gurdjieff* (1966) by Rafael Lefort, widely believed to be a pseudonym of Sufi author and teacher Idries Shah. (62) Gurdjieffians immediately attacked the book as a “distasteful fabrication” and “intentionally abusive invention.”

The book relates the journeys of seeker Lefort in search of the source of Gurdjieff’s teachings, concluding that they were of Sufi origin. Many of the events described in the book are factually impossible (Gurdjieff’s imputed teachers were long dead by the 1960s when Lefort reportedly met them). But John Bennett insightfully argues that the book “is recognizable as a set of fables written to express a point of view and not in any sense a factual account.” (63) A careful reading of the book reveals that Lefort regards Gurdjieff as an authentic teacher who was sent to the West to prepare the ground for a more comprehensive spiritual teaching appropriate for the 20th century. But Lefort also argues that Gurdjieff’s successors created a rigid mechanical system of ideas and practices, based on their incomplete understanding of his teachings, which conditioned people and prevented real spiritual growth.

Although Gurdjieff brought a complex, thought-provoking system of psychological and cosmological ideas to the West, his teaching is essentially experiential at its heart and can lose its meaning and centre of gravity when approached from a strictly intellectual or scholastic perspective: “When this background in experience is lacking, one is unable to give the Work ideas their real weight; they become abstract, lose their depth, and are manipulated more or less happily under the sole control of subjective appreciation.” (64) The academic mind has been trained to quantify, systematize and create taxonomic categories to explain any phenomenon under study. Practical, experiential study in a field is not a necessary requirement, and when the scholarly approach is applied to esoteric and spiritual ideas it leads to an inability to properly value the subtlety and depth of these transformative teachings:

We must agree that in all fields ideas can be well conveyed by properly prepared people. It is, however, evident that in the case of “experiential” disciplines, which are normally included in spiritual teachings at a very high degree of sophistication, ideas taken too literally can only lead to sterile theorizing and distortion when their symbolic or practical significance is not understood. And we should not forget that the most important part of Gurdjieff’s teaching is necessarily conveyed under the cloak of analogy and symbolism. (65)

Although scholars and academics may lack actual involvement in a living school, their work is not entirely without value and may have a useful, though limited, function in introducing the teaching to a wider audience or clarifying certain ideas and concepts by providing a fresh, quasi-objective perspective.

Perhaps the best example of the confluence of scholarly expertise and genuine insight is Michel Waldberg’s *Gurdjieff: An Approach to His Ideas*. Based on a 1966 lecture at the Musée de l’Homme in Paris, the book presents Gurdjieff’s major psychological and

cosmological teachings by creatively synthesizing material from *Beelzebub's Tales* and *In Search of the Miraculous*. Especially helpful is his treatment of the complex structure and content of *Beelzebub's Tales* by a detailed analysis of key passages from the book. Waldberg's effort has been widely applauded and his book is recommended by many Work practitioners.

Waking Up, by well-known transpersonal psychologist Charles Tart, is also a useful introduction to Gurdjieff's teachings, especially his psychological system. Tart has a solid practical grounding in Gurdjieff's ideas and integrates them with many current findings in the fields of psychology and psychotherapy.

A third academic book of interest is *Philosophy and Art in Gurdjieff's Beelzebub* by Dr. Anna Challenger. The text is an outgrowth of her PhD dissertation, and provides an in-depth and thoughtful analysis of *Beelzebub's Tales*, Gurdjieff's theory of art and the possible sources of his teaching. Her Sufi perspective colours some of her interpretations but does not fundamentally detract from her generally intelligent insights and overriding respect for Gurdjieff and his teaching mission.

A final category of ancillary literature consists of works by individuals who studied with direct students of Gurdjieff. Many of Gurdjieff's pupils were very gifted in their own right, had assimilated the essence of his theoretical and practical teachings, and were given permission by him to teach others. They passed on their knowledge to a new generation of students who in turn have shared what they have experienced and learned. These books vary widely in quality and significance. Many reflect the "law of diminishing returns," whereby the transmission of a valid spiritual teaching is progressively weakened with the passage of time. But others have real substance and constitute a significant contribution to the Work.

Rodney Collin was a student of Ouspensky in the 1930s and 1940s who was given a Work task to reconstruct the system of ideas he had learned from his teacher in the framework of the natural sciences and historical record. The result was *The Theory of Celestial Influence*, published in 1954. Collin's vision in writing the book was to show the underlying unity and archetypal pattern of laws and influences at work at all levels of the universe. In his effort to harmonize the scientific world view with traditional esoteric teachings (principally those of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky), he explores the ideas of scale, time and dimension, the rise and fall of civilizations, physiological processes in the human body, and many other fascinating topics. Although Collin does not completely succeed in his task – partly because the scientific knowledge available to him at the time has been expanded, and in some cases, superseded – his ambitious book is impressive in its scope and vision and presents a universe imbued with purpose and metaphysical meaning.

Another author who has attempted to connect scientific concepts with Gurdjieff's teachings is Dr. Keith Buzzell, a physician and longtime student of the Work. His primary teachers were Irmis Popoff, who studied with Ouspensky and Gurdjieff, and Annie Lou Staveley, the founder of Two Rivers Farm in Oregon.

Buzzell has written a series of impressive books: *Man – A Three-Brained Being*, *Perspectives on Beelzebub's Tales*, *Explorations in Active Mentation*, *Reflections on Gurdjieff's Whim* and *A New Conception of God*. He cites as his inspiration in writing the volumes, Gurdjieff's 'third oblongian striving': "To know ever more and more concerning the laws of World-creation and World-maintenance." The focus of his books is the vast cosmological teaching presented in *Beelzebub's Tales*, interpreted in light of modern scientific knowledge. The books are very challenging, offering original insights and a highly creative exploration of Gurdjieff's central psychological and cosmological ideas. Many of his books are accompanied by exceptional, high-quality diagrams and illustrations, which illuminate the text and encapsulate the complex ideas the author so carefully explores.

William Patterson is a prolific writer of Fourth Way books and a student of John Pentland. Patterson has also written, directed and produced an award-winning trilogy of films on Gurdjieff's life and mission. His first book, *Eating the "I"*, is a frankly autobiographical narrative of his involvement in the Work, revealing for its depiction of the tense, humourless atmosphere of the Gurdjieff Foundation of New York.

Patterson is a skilled and absorbing writer who is very knowledgeable about Gurdjieff's teachings and carefully researches and documents his books. At their best, they are major contributions to the Gurdjieff literature. Notable titles include *Taking with the Left Hand*, *Ladies of the Rope*, and his latest offering, *Spiritual Survival in a Radically Changing World-Time*. However, some other books, especially *Struggle of the Magicians*, which is sharply critical of three of Gurdjieff's important students – P.D. Ouspensky, A.R. Orage and John Bennett – are less successful. The main fault of the book is Patterson's excessive canonization of Gurdjieff and judgmental assessment of Ouspensky, Orage and Bennett, by all accounts brilliant, though flawed, students. (66)

Joseph Azize, an academic specializing in ancient history and religious studies, was a student of George Adie who worked with Gurdjieff in the late 1940s. Azize authored a definitive biography of his teacher: *George Adie: A Pupil in Australia*. He has penned a scholarly study of Gurdjieff's practical teachings and exercises – *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises* – which was published by Oxford University Press in 2020.

Azize conducted meticulous research on the origin, structure and purpose of a wide range of Gurdjieff's inner exercises. The exercises were taught orally, but many of his students have provided written descriptions of their nature and content. He "offers the first complete study of the exercises and their theoretical foundation. It shows the continuity in Gurdjieff's teaching, but also the development and change." (67) The heart of the book is a detailed compilation of Gurdjieff's "contemplative exercises" from the Russian years to his final teaching period in the 1940s. Also included are exercises from his direct students such as Jeanne de Salzmann, George and Helen Adie, and others. The book is of great value as many of the inner exercises have not been previously published and were unknown outside of Work circles.

Biographies of Gurdjieff

The would-be biographer of Gurdjieff is faced with a number of daunting challenges. The first difficulty, common to many biographies of exceptional people, can be encapsulated by the dictum “the lesser cannot measure the greater.” This highlights the inherent problem for any biographer to capture in the written word a person of Gurdjieff’s great complexity, magnitude and spiritual evolution.

Gurdjieff’s own personal history also poses a significant challenge to a biographer. There is virtually no independent verification of any of the events of Gurdjieff’s life before he began publicly teaching in Russia in 1912; the researcher has to rely on his own account of those years in his semi-autobiographical *Meetings with Remarkable Men* and other writings.

Factual biographical investigation and evaluation is also hindered by Gurdjieff’s decision in 1930 to burn his passports, correspondence and other items of evidentiary value. Throughout his life he made ambiguous and contradictory statements about many aspects of his life, including his age and date of birth (scholarly opinion ranges from 1866 to 1877). Some believe that Gurdjieff deliberately “covered his tracks” as an integral part of his teaching mission.

Gurdjieff was also notorious for spinning wild improbable tales, playing roles and engaging in controversial, often shocking, behaviour, much in the manner of teachers following the ‘Path of Blame.’ He was quoted many times as saying that “truth can sometimes be served by lies.” Separating the reality from the “acting” and dissimulation is a major, if not impossible, hurdle for any serious biographer or researcher.

Academics and biographers have often turned to Gurdjieff’s writings for valid autobiographical information, but have been confronted by the very real possibility that many of the events described in his books are more “mythological” than literal:

Gurdjieff mythologized his life and so it is not possible to accept these events and dates as accurate. Each of his texts contain autobiographical material, but this is shaped according to the function of the specific text. Thus the roles that Gurdjieff presents himself playing vary in all four texts. Gurdjieff gives his readers clues to this unreliability, through anomalies and contradictions in his texts. (68)

Meetings with Remarkable Men has been the primary source of information about Gurdjieff’s early life and his search for ancient esoteric knowledge. James Moore discusses some of the challenges confronting the biographical analysis of this book:

Gurdjieff confides an impressionistic version of his early manhood, unrolling the lands of Transcaucasia and Central Asia before us, even while he hints at a parallel geography of man’s psyche and the route he followed to penetrate it. Well and good on the level of essential meaning. Yet judged by more straight-laced historical criteria the book is unhelpful.

The disciplined biographic mind stands aghast at its contradictions and omissions: dates quiver and dance in the heat; the hero's footprints are lost in the shifting sand, and frequently enough the entire narrative disappears over the rim of some telling allegory. (69)

Biographers have also turned to students and followers of Gurdjieff for biographical details, but with decidedly mixed results. Some who were approached were forthcoming and supplied letters, notes, diary entries and other generally unavailable material. But others presented a palpable barrier of secrecy and silence, and were reluctant to share unpublished texts, be personally interviewed or questioned by correspondence. James Webb even accuses the circle around Gurdjieff of withholding information, mystification and deliberate or unconscious distortion, creating serious problems for a biographer:

They result from a deliberate policy of obstruction on the part of some of Gurdjieff's followers. There can be no real quarrel with this, because these followers are acting in complete good faith, protecting what they see as the integrity of the ideas with which they have been entrusted. There is no reason whatever for someone to cooperate in an undertaking of which he or she may thoroughly disapprove. I have been refused permission to quote from certain unpublished writings, and it is also probable that a large quantity of potentially useful information has been withheld or suppressed. (70)

Even cooperative, well-intentioned students may be unreliable sources of historical information. Professor Paul Beekman Taylor argues that many of the accounts of Gurdjieff's pupils are biased, misleading, contradictory, speculative and in some cases pure invention. (71)

Despite these formidable obstacles, there have been a number of well-researched comprehensive biographies of Gurdjieff which, although not without flaws, contribute to a meaningful understanding of his life, teachings and spiritual significance.

John G. Bennett met Gurdjieff in Constantinople in 1921, studied briefly with him at the Prieuré and later more extensively in Paris in 1948-49. Bennett's *Gurdjieff: Making a New World* (1973) is not a biography in the traditional sense but has been creatively described as an "interpretive biography." He conducted original research with the support of Gurdjieff's family and close students and his writing is knowledgeable, informative and insightful. Even biographer James Moore, who is a frequent critic of Bennett, acknowledges the strengths of the volume:

His biographical contribution *Gurdjieff: Making a New World* is a noble failure: its geographical, historical, and linguistic allusions are exciting; it is unsurpassed in differentiating epochs in Gurdjieff's life; and it conveys a strong and restless interest in his purpose and evolving methods and paradigms. Bennett takes Gurdjieff's stature and crucial importance for granted, and develops his exegesis fearlessly – as though with an eye to a 21st century which has set Gurdjieff high in the pantheon of innovative thinkers. (72)

However, Bennett's book is certainly open to the valid criticism that some of his material concerning Gurdjieff's travels, sources of knowledge and life mission are purely speculative and coloured by the author's own subjective preoccupations.

James Webb's 1980 biography of Gurdjieff, *The Harmonious Circle: The Lives and Works of G.I. Gurdjieff, P.D. Ouspensky, and Their Followers*, has been surrounded with controversy since its publication. His 608-page tome was ambitious in scope, extensively researched, and scholarly and detached in its approach. Much of the content was based on original archival research and personal interviews with many of Gurdjieff's principal students and followers. James Moore complimented Webb shortly after the publication of his book for his "pioneer achievement." He wrote: "Accept my sincere congratulations on your attainment: the intricate research, the scrupulous drafting, the exciting new perspectives, your patient struggle against unprecedented delays." (73) Others have not been so kind. Paul Beekman Taylor has accused Webb of factual inaccuracies, accepting rumour as reality, refusing to reveal anonymous unpublished sources, and misquoting and misrepresenting some of the people he interviewed. Critics have also assailed Webb for taking quotations out of context, subjectively interpreting Gurdjieff's actions and intentions, and engaging in wild unsubstantiated speculation.

Webb was strongly impacted and deeply troubled by his experiences writing "a definitive biography" of Gurdjieff and his followers. By 1978, two years before the publication of his book, he was exhibiting symptoms of schizophrenia and paranoid delusions. (74) In May 1980, shortly after the publication of his biography, James Webb tragically committed suicide.

James Moore's 1991 *Gurdjieff: The Anatomy of a Myth* is an ambitious and well-researched biography of Gurdjieff. Moore had previously published *Gurdjieff and Mansfield* in 1980, which detailed the relationship between Gurdjieff and writer Katherine Mansfield at the Prieuré shortly before her death in January 1923.

Moore was introduced to Gurdjieff's ideas by Dr. Kenneth Walker and studied at the Gurdjieff Society of London with Henriette Lannes beginning in 1956. Moore has always been something of an iconoclast and a controversial figure. He was even expelled from the London society in 1994 after writing an article in a scholarly religious journal criticizing innovations in the Work initiated by Jeanne de Salzman and senior members of the Gurdjieff Foundation.

For his biography, Moore drew upon published and unpublished sources and conducted interviews with many of Gurdjieff's senior students. His scholarship and mastery of the English language is impressive and the book is certainly an interesting and entertaining read. Moore's writing style is unique; and he even admits that while some readers respond "warmly" to his syntactic gymnastics, "others hate it." His writing is replete with obscure metaphoric allusions, witticisms and dry English humour. But behind the unorthodox stylistic veneer there is a solid foundation of conscientious scholarship and thoughtful weighing of evidence.

A more serious concern is the author's unapologetic lionization of Gurdjieff which clouds his objectivity. His portrait of Gurdjieff is overwhelmingly sympathetic, leading one reviewer to describe the book as "a hagiography," as he makes every excuse possible for Gurdjieff's sometimes outrageous behaviour.

An important biography of Gurdjieff was published in 2014. William Patrick Patterson's *Georgi Ivanovitch Gurdjieff: The Man, The Teaching, His Mission* is by far the most comprehensive, well-researched and scholarly endeavor to date to describe and evaluate Gurdjieff's life, teaching and spiritual mission. Patterson has written extensively on the Fourth Way and studied with John Pentland, who was authorized by Gurdjieff to lead the Work in America following his death.

The 650-plus page volume is structured chronologically as the author integrates oral and written accounts of Gurdjieff's life and teaching with previously unpublished material from the library archives of some of his most important students, including P.D. Ouspensky, Kathryn Hulme and Margaret Anderson. Also included in the book is the complete scenario of Gurdjieff's ballet *The Struggle of the Magicians*, and a series of essays by Ouspensky (most notably "Why I Left Gurdjieff"), other direct pupils of Gurdjieff, and Patterson himself.

Patterson writes clearly and thoughtfully, and skillfully embeds the key ideas of Gurdjieff's Fourth Way teaching within the narrative of his life. The author, much like biographer James Moore, clearly holds Gurdjieff in the highest regard and rejects any criticism of his personal behaviour or sometimes controversial teaching methods. This colours his evaluation of many of Gurdjieff's primary students who, at times, questioned their teacher's motivations and actions. But overall, this impressive volume is an exceptional accomplishment and sets a new "gold standard" of biographical excellence.

The most recent biography, by Roger Lipsey, is *Gurdjieff Reconsidered: The Life, the Teachings, the Legacy*. Lipsey is an accomplished editor, translator, art historian and biographer of Dag Hammarskjöld, as well as the author of studies of Thomas Merton and A.K. Coomaraswamy. In her foreword to the book, author Cynthia Bourgeault expresses her admiration for Lipsey as a writer: "Tremendously literate, with a sweeping breadth of knowledge of the Western intellectual tradition, he is also a longtime student of the Work – now one of its respected elders – and his long years of laboring in this vineyard will be immediately apparent, to those who know the Work, through the signature fragrance of his presentation." (75)

One of Lipsey's primary goals in writing the biography was to challenge the stereotypes surrounding Gurdjieff's life and teachings. To do this he conducts an extensive review of each decade of Gurdjieff's teaching mission in the West and the obstacles that confronted him in introducing an esoteric teaching – the Fourth way – to a culture unfamiliar with a genuine inner path to conscious evolution and self-realization.

Lipsev adroitly weaves historical facts, the writings and memoirs of direct students, published and previously unpublished material from library archives, and his own intuitive perceptions to create a tapestry of astute insights into the man and his teachings. The reader is continually made cognizant of the evolution of the teachings and its adaptation to changing circumstances and the capacities of his students. The book also reveals the sharp divide between the accounts of Gurdjieff's direct students testifying to the positive impact of his work with them and the writings of harsh critics who denigrated him and his teachings (mainly intellectuals and proponents of the Traditionalist school of metaphysics such as René Guénon and Frithjof Schuon). Extensive notes and a lengthy bibliography also accompany the text.

NOTES

- (1) Keith Buzzell *Perspectives on Beelzebub's Tales* (Salt Lake City: Fifth Press, 2005), p. 3.
- (2) William Patrick Patterson *Voices in the Dark* (Fairfax, California: Arete Communications, 2001), p. 28.
- (3) Jacob Needleman "Introduction" in Lizelle Reymond and Sri Anirvân *To Live Within* (Sandpoint, Idaho: Morning Light Press, 2007), p. xi.
- (4) Michel de Salzman "Footnote to the Gurdjieff Literature" in Jacob Needleman, ed. *The Inner Journey: Views from the Gurdjieff Work* (Sandpoint, Idaho: Morning Light Press, 2008), pp. 165-166.
- (5) Kenneth Walker *Venture with Ideas* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1972), p. 157.
- (6) Kenneth Walker *Venture with Ideas* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1972), p. 157.
- (7) *Guide and Index to G.I. Gurdjieff's Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* (Toronto: Traditional Studies Press, 2003).
- (8) Jacob Needleman "Introduction" in Lizelle Reymond and Sri Anirvân *To Live Within* (Sandpoint, Idaho: Morning Light Press, 2007), p. xviii.
- (9) "Editor's Note" in G.I. Gurdjieff *Views from the Real World: Early Talks of Gurdjieff* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1973), p. x.
- (10) A number of previous bibliographic compilations and guides to the literature have been published or are available on websites devoted to the study of Gurdjieff and his system. These include:
 - Walter Driscoll *Gurdjieff: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland, 1985)
 - "Annotated Bibliography" (*Gurdjieff International Review*, 1998) www.gurdjieff.org/bibliography4.htm
 - James Moore "Gurdjieff: The Man and the Literature" (*Gurdjieff International Review*, Fall 1998, Vol. II No. 1) www.gurdjieff.org/moore1.htm
 - Walter Driscoll "An Introduction to the Writings of G.I. Gurdjieff" (*Gurdjieff International Review*, Fall 1999, Vol. III No. 1) www.gurdjieff.org/driscoll3.htm
 - Michel de Salzman "Footnote to the Gurdjieff Literature" in Jacob Needleman (ed.) *The Inner Journey: Views from the Gurdjieff Work* (Sandpoint, Idaho: Morning Light Press, 2008)
- (11) G.I. Gurdjieff *Life is Real Only Then, When "I Am"* (New York: Triangle Editions, 1975), p. 4.

- (12) Annabeth McCorkle *The Gurdjieff Years 1929-1949* (Utrecht, the Netherlands: Eureka Editions, 2013), pp. 38-39.
- (13) Paul Beekman Taylor provides a detailed and extensive overview of the process of writing, editing and re-writing the three series of *All and Everything* during the period from 1924-1949 in *Real Worlds of G.I. Gurdjieff* (Utrecht, the Netherlands: Eureka Editions, 2012), pp. 55-78.
- (14) C.S. Nott *Teachings of Gurdjieff* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974), p. 131.
- (15) C.S. Nott *Teachings of Gurdjieff* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974), pp. 125-126.
- (16) James Webb *The Harmonious Circle: The Lives and Work of G.I. Gurdjieff, P.D. Ouspensky, and Their Followers* (Boston: Shambhala, 1987), p. 430.
- (17) C.S. Nott *Journey Through This World* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1969), p. 242.
- (18) Jessmin and Dushka Howarth *It's Up to Ourselves: A Mother, A Daughter, and Gurdjieff* (New York: Gurdjieff Heritage Society, 2008), p. xiv.
- (19) Jacob Needleman (ed.) "Introduction" to *The Inner Journey: Views from the Gurdjieff Work* (Sandpoint, Idaho: Morning Light Press, 2008), pp. xxi-xxii.
- (20) James Moore *Gurdjieff: The Anatomy of a Myth* (Rockport, Massachusetts: Element Books, 1991), p. 249.
- (21) G.I. Gurdjieff *Life is Real Only Then, When "I Am"* (New York: Triangle Editions, 1975), p. 50.
- (22) Roger Lipsey *Gurdjieff Reconsidered: The Life, the Teachings, the Legacy* (Boulder: Shambhala, 2019), pp. 292-293.
- (23) Terry Winter Owens and Suzanne Smith "A Commentary on *Beelzebub's Tales*" (*Gurdjieff International Review*, Winter 1997/1998, Vol. I No. 2)
www.gurdjieff.org/owens1.htm
- (24) J.G. Bennett *Is There "Life" on Earth?* (New York: Stonehill Publishing, 1973), p. 112.
- (25) P.D. Ouspensky *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 279.
- (26) James Webb *The Harmonious Circle: The Lives and Work of G.I. Gurdjieff, P.D. Ouspensky, and Their Followers* (Boston: Shambhala, 1987), pp. 310-311.

- (27) Keith Buzzell explores the use of neologisms in *A New Conception of God: Further Reflections on Gurdjieff's Whim* (Salt Lake City: Fifth Press, 2013, p. 6):

Beelzebub's Tales has often been called *impenetrable* and *impossibly complex*. The use of neologisms is a major facet of this apparent difficulty. Why did he create so many new words and weave them into so many of the primary notions he presented? It is our sense of it that Gurdjieff elected to create this multitude of new words in order to provide a *new* beginning, a new language, by which the comprehension of a new conception of God would be more possible. In effect, he says that the language that has accumulated over many centuries has led to a veritable tower of Babel, in that meanings have mixed and accumulated local nuances that inevitably conflict and/or greatly alter and limit the communication of fundamental qualities and attributes . . . The neologisms provide a new basis for precise communication and thus prevent the extension of past misunderstandings and constructions of meaning. It is true that, on initial exposure to his many new words, a special effort has to be made to differentiate the basic and nuanced meanings of these new expressions. Over time and with repeated personal inner experience of what Gurdjieff has encompassed by these neologisms, one begins to think, feel and sense the arena of meanings and significances that are intended. Bit by bit, *Beelzebub's Tales* becomes expressed in a new language, with breadth and specificities that 'ordinary language lacks.

- (28) Anna Challenger, in *Philosophy and Art in Gurdjieff's Beelzebub* (Amsterdam: Rodopi Press, 2002, p. 74), argues that Gurdjieff chose his challenging writing style based on his belief that the harder people worked for something the more they would benefit:

The casual reader, first confronted with the intimidating length of the work and then prevented from easily understanding it because of the difficult style and idiosyncratic terminology, is in no position either to agree or disagree, accept or reject what is written. The struggle that takes place in the reader of *Beelzebub's Tales* is with his or her inner nature: whether to take the easier path of giving way to the law of inertia, justifying the decision on the basis of the length and extreme difficulty of the work, or whether to make the effort of will required by the task of trying to fathom such a writing . . . Gurdjieff's insistent style demands constant affirmation from the reader and each affirmation results in a victory of will over inertia. In this way, Gurdjieff creates the possibility for the reader to strengthen will and create being.

- (29) Keith Buzzell *Reflections on Gurdjieff's Whim* (Salt Lake City: Fifth Press, 2012), p. 2
- (30) John G. Bennett enumerates some of the "shock" aspects of *Beelzebub's Tales* which Gurdjieff consciously engineered to provoke his readers to evaluate virtually every aspect of their current worldview in *Is There "Life" on Earth?* (New York: Stonehill Publishing, 1973), pp. 114-115.

The difficulties of *Beelzebub* are not only intellectual. There are obstacles of quite a different kind in the subject matter itself. From start to finish the book outrages any susceptibilities the reader may have. The scientist is contemptuous of the dogmatic assertions which appear inconsistent with the most firmly established scientific ‘facts.’ The historian is amused or irritated at the disregard for all accepted chronology and the claim, made throughout the book, that the true course of history has been on quite different lines from what is generally accepted. The philologist can make no sense of the linguistic usage, nor the anthropologist of the statements about races and the migration of peoples. The artist is pilloried as a useless degenerate and all our modern art denounced as an altogether harmful factor in human life. Religious susceptibilities are wounded by the accounts of the life and work of the Founders of the great religions which are quite contrary to current beliefs. Our western notions of good taste are shocked by the open discussion of problems of sex and human relationships generally. National susceptibilities are outraged by merciless satires upon the life and customs of the various countries of the world. Our ideas of literary style are set at naught. Finally, there runs through the book a note of arrogant superiority which is utterly offensive to our notions of ‘good form.’ It is safe to say that no reader, at a first perusal of the book, will reach the last page without having been shocked and outraged at some point.

- (31) J.G. Bennett *Is There “Life” on Earth?* (New York: Stonehill Publishing, 1973), p. 113.
- (32) G.I. Gurdjieff “On Attention and Understanding of *Beelzebub’s Tales*” (*Gurdjieff International Review*, Fall 1998, Vol. II No. 1) www.gurdjieff.org/gurdjieff1.htm
- (33) A.L. Staveley “Commentary on *Beelzebub’s Tales*” (*Gurdjieff International Review*, Spring 1999, Vol. II No. 3) www.gurdjieff.org/staveley2.htm
- (34) Roger Lipsey *Gurdjieff Reconsidered: The Life, the Teachings, the Legacy* (Boulder: Shambhala, 2019), pp. 303-304..
- (35) Dust cover of G.I. Gurdjieff *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson* (New York: Viking Arkana, 1992).
- (36) A number of insightful commentaries on *Beelzebub's Tales* have been published or are available on the Internet. They are useful to anyone approaching this difficult text, providing a basic orientation to Gurdjieff's unusual language and challenging ideas:
- A.R. Orage “Commentary on *Beelzebub’s Tales*” in C.S. Nott *Teachings of Gurdjieff: The Journal of a Pupil* (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, 1962)
 - Kenneth Walker “A Commentary on All and Everything” in *The Making of Man* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963)

- J. G. Bennett “Gurdjieff’s Style and Terminology” in *Gurdjieff: Making a New World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973)
- J. G. Bennett *Talks on Beelzebub’s Tales* (Sherborne: Coombe Springs Press, 1977)
- Michel Waldberg *Gurdjieff: An Approach to His Ideas* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981)
- Henri Tracol “Thus Spake Beelzebub” *The Taste For Things That Are True* (Dorset, England: Element Books, 1994)
- Terry Winter Owens and Suzanne Smith “Commentary on Beelzebub’s Tales” (*Gurdjieff International Review*, Winter 1997/1998, Vol. I. No. 2)
www.gurdjieff.org/owens1.htm
- Terry Winter Owens “The Struggle to ‘Fathom the Gist’ of *Beelzebub’s Tales*” (*Gurdjieff International Review*, Winter 1997/1998, Vol. I No. 2)
www.gurdjieff.org/owens3.htm
- John G. Bennett “Gurdjieff’s All and Everything: A Study by J.G. Bennett” (*Gurdjieff International Review*, Spring 1999, Vol. II No. 3)
www.gurdjieff.org/bennett3.htm
- Manuel Rainoird “Beelzebub, A Master Stroke.” (*Gurdjieff International Review*, Spring 2000, Vol. III No. 2) www.gurdjieff.org/rainoird.htm
- Anna Challenger *Philosophy and Art in Gurdjieff’s Beelzebub* (Amsterdam: Rodopi Press, 2002)
- Keith Buzzell *Perspectives on Beelzebub’s Tales* (Salt Lake City: Fifth Press, 2005)
- Keith Buzzell *Reflections on Gurdjieff’s Whim* (Salt Lake City: Fifth Press, 2012)
- Michael Pittman “Gurdjieff’s Discourse on the Soul: *Beelzebub’s Tales* and Sufism” in Michael Pittman *Classical Spirituality in Contemporary America* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012)

(37) Kenneth Walker’s impression of *Meetings* is consistent with the consensus of many readers. In *Venture with Ideas* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1972, pp. 162-163), he writes: “When readings from the second book began, I was immediately struck by the change in the author’s literary style. His portraits of the companions who had accompanied him in his journeys were works of art. So skillfully were their characters drawn that they became for me living and likeable men whom I had met in some distant and all but forgotten past. Here in this book was excellent writing, descriptions of people and scenery which showed great literary ability.”

(38) Terry Winter Owens “A Commentary on *Meetings with Remarkable Men*”
www.gurdjieff.org/owens2.htm

(39) In his biography *The Harmonious Circle: The Lives and Work of G.I. Gurdjieff, P.D. Ouspensky, and Their Followers* (Boston: Shambhala, 1987), p. 544, James Webb discusses this question:

At Gurdjieff's death the Third Series was left in a fragmentary state. Two chapters alone seem to have been completed, and others exist only in note form. A chapter on "The Four Bodies of Man" which Gurdjieff announced in *Meetings with Remarkable Men* is said to have been destroyed by the author himself. What remains of the Third Series is too incomplete to give any real idea of Gurdjieff's intentions for the book.

- (40) Jeanne de Salzmänn "Foreword" to *Life is Real Only Then, When "I Am"* (New York: Triangle Editions, 1975), p. xi.
- (41) Jeanne de Salzmänn "Foreword" to *Life is Real Only Then, When "I Am"* (New York: Triangle Editions, 1975), pp. xiii-xiv.
- (42) J.G. Bennett *Is There "Life" on Earth?* (New York: Stonehill Publishing, 1973), p. 144.
- (43) J.G. Bennett *Is There "Life" on Earth?* (New York: Stonehill Publishing, 1973), p. 143.
- (44) Jeanne de Salzmänn "Foreword" *Views from the Real World: Early Talks of Gurdjieff* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1973), p. vii.
- (45) G.I. Gurdjieff *Gurdjieff's Early Talks 1914-1931* (London: Book Studio, 2014), p. xix.
- (46) Dust cover of G.I. Gurdjieff *Paris Meetings 1943* (Toronto: Dolmen Meadow Editions, 2017).
- (47) Michel de Salzmänn "Footnote to the Gurdjieff Literature" in Jacob Needleman, ed. *The Inner Journey: Views from the Gurdjieff Work* (Sandpoint, Idaho: Morning Light Press, 2008), p 172.
- (48) J. G. Bennett *Gurdjieff: Making a New World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 3.
- (49) J. G. Bennett *Gurdjieff: Making a New World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), pp. 1-2.
- (50) See the web document by Paul Beekman Taylor, "Inventors of Gurdjieff" www.gurdjieff.org/taylor1.htm
- (51) Michel de Salzmänn "Footnote to the Gurdjieff Literature" in Jacob Needleman (ed.) *The Inner Journey: Views from the Gurdjieff Work* (Sandpoint, Idaho: Morning Light Press, 2008), pp. 171-72.

- (52) A number of students have written about this “unknowable” aspect of Gurdjieff:
- P.D. Ouspensky: “Our feelings of this ‘acting’ in G. was exceptionally strong. Among ourselves we often said we never saw him and never would.”
 - Margaret Anderson: “Gurdjieff is not only unknown. Perhaps he is unknowable.”
 - Jean Toomer: “I do not know G. I have never known G. I never will.”
 - Sophia Ouspensky: “I do not pretend to understand Georgy Ivanovitch. For me he is X . . . No one knows who is the real Georgy Ivanovitch, for he hides himself from all of us. It is useless to try to know him.”
- (53) G.I. Gurdjieff “Translator’s Note” in *Meetings with Remarkable Men* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p. x.
- (54) Michel de Salzman “Footnote to the Gurdjieff Literature” in Jacob Needleman, ed. *The Inner Journey: Views from the Gurdjieff Work* (Sandpoint, Idaho: Morning Light Press, 2008), p. 172.
- (55) C.S. Nott *Journey Through This World* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1969), p. 243.
- (56) For an excellent overview of the group see William Patterson’s *Ladies of the Rope* (Fairfax, California: Arete Communications, 1999).
- (57) Solange Claustres *Becoming Conscious with G.I. Gurdjieff* (Utrecht, Netherlands: Eureka Editions, 2009), p. 17.
- (58) A.L. Staveley *Memories of Gurdjieff* (Aurora, Oregon: Two Rivers Press, 1978), pp. 71-72.
- (59) *The New Man* (London: Stuart & Watkins, 1950) is a unique interpretation of the parables and miracles of Christ from an esoteric perspective. In Nicoll’s own words, “All sacred writings contain an outer and an inner meaning. Behind the literal words lies another range of meaning, another form of knowledge.” *Living Time* (London: Stuart & Watkins, 1952) contains a series of thought-provoking essays and insightful reflections on the meaning of time and the different levels of reality existing in the human being and the universe. Dr. Nicoll draws from an impressive range of metaphysical and philosophical traditions to support his arguments.
- (60) Michel de Salzman “Footnote to the Gurdjieff Literature” in Jacob Needleman, ed. *The Inner Journey: Views from the Gurdjieff Work* (Sandpoint, Idaho: Morning Light Press, 2008), p. 164.

- (61) Frithjof Schuon and René Guénon are associated with a metaphysical school sometimes referred to as the “Primordial Tradition.” They believed that authentic spiritual transmission could only take place through initiation into a formal religious traditionlike Christianity or Islam. Gurdjieff’s unorthodox approach and unconventional behaviour were anathema to René Guénon and his followers and subject to their frequent criticisms and attack.
- (62) Idries Shah has come under attack by a number of Gurdjieff’s followers, none more virulent than James Moore (“Neo-Sufism: The Case of Idries Shah” *Religion Today* Vol. 3(3), 1986, pp. 4-8). Ironically, many of the accusations hurled by Moore at Shah (misdirection, dissimulation, obfuscation) could also apply to Gurdjieff. For a more balanced and nuanced critique of Idries Shah and his work see Yannis Toussulis *Sufism and the Way of Blame: Hidden Sources of a Sacred Psychology* (Wheaton, Illinois: Quest Books, 2010) and Michael Pittman *Classic Spirituality in Contemporary America* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012). In fairness to Shah, his numerous books of Sufi teachings – especially his collections of traditional teaching stories and Mulla Nasrudin tales – are highly regarded by many students and teachers from a wide variety of spiritual traditions.
- (63) J.G. Bennett *Gurdjieff: Making a New World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 81.
- (64) Michel de Salzman “Footnote to the Gurdjieff Literature” in Jacob Needleman (ed.) *The Inner Journey: Views from the Gurdjieff Work* (Sandpoint, Idaho: Morning Light Press, 2008), p. 168.
- (65) Michel de Salzman “Footnote to the Gurdjieff Literature” in Jacob Needleman (ed.) *The Inner Journey: Views from the Gurdjieff Work* (Sandpoint, Idaho: Morning Light Press, 2008), p. 169.
- (66) Patterson is not without his detractors and has a controversial reputation in Work circles. He has been accused of self-inflation and excessive self-promotion through his website, book advertising, public seminars and workshops, DVDs and in-house journal. Patterson routinely criticizes and attacks other spiritual teachers and teachings, lionizes Gurdjieff as a “Messenger from Above,” implying he is at the level of Jesus, Buddha and Mohammed. And he characterizes Gurdjieff’s magnum opus *All and Everything* as the last great spiritual message in a line that includes the Old and New Testaments, the Rig-Veda, the Koran, and other sacred texts. Such unverifiable pronouncements diminish his stature as a writer and, to some degree, call into question his spiritual authority as a self-appointed teacher of the Fourth Way.
- (67) Dust cover of Joseph Azize *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).
- (68) Sophia Wellbeloved *Gurdjieff: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 21.

- (69) James Moore *Gurdjieff: The Anatomy of a Myth* (Rockport, Massachusetts: Element Books, 1991), p. 24.
- (70) James Webb *The Harmonious Circle: The Lives and Work of G.I. Gurdjieff, P.D. Ouspensky, and Their Followers* (Boston: Shambhala, 1987), p. 13.
- (71) See the web document by Paul Beekman Taylor “Inventors of Gurdjieff”
www.gurdjieff.org/taylor1.htm
- (72) See the web document by James Moore “Gurdjieff: A Biographer Digresses”
www.Gurdjieff-Bibliography.com
- (73) See the web document by James Moore “Gurdjieff: A Biographer Digresses”
www.Gurdjieff-Bibliography.com
- (74) Hints of Webb’s precarious mental state can be surmised from the Preface to his book:
- It eventually became clear that an attempt was being made to ensnare me forcibly in the sort of activities about which I had hoped to write from a detached point of view. I must admit that this attempt was temporarily successful, and I am certain that it greatly helped me to understand the nature of Gurdjieff’s curious disciples. Yet the ethics of the situation continue to puzzle me. At one point, I suspected that I had been manipulated into writing the sort of book that the hierarchy wanted written: at another that the attempt to engage me in the Work was designed to ensure that no book would be written at all.
- (75) Roger Lipsey *Gurdjieff Reconsidered: The Life, the Teachings, the Legacy* (Boulder: Shambhala, 2019), p. xv.